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San Francisco Cinematheque
1991 Program Notes

Production and Layout:

Laura Poitras
Michelle Sabol

Written and Researched by:

Jerome Carolfi
Kurt Easterwood
Susanne Fairfax
Albert Kilchesty
Crosby McCloy
Jenny Perlin
Lynne Sachs
Eric S. Theise

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San Francisco Cinematheque, 1991-92:

Staff:

Steve Anker, *Artistic Director*
David Gerstein, *Executive Director*
Albert Kilchesty, *Administrative Assistant*
Laura Poitras, Michelle Sabol, *Program Coordinator*

Board of Directors:

Eric S. Theise, *President*
Sally Allen
Lynn Hershman
Lynne Sachs
Scott Taylor
Susan Vigil

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Introduction

TESTAMENT TO AN ORPHANED ART

Film criticism is blessed with its share of quaint dogmatic conventions, two of which are “Ten Best Lists” and “Decade In Review” analyses summing up those years’ achievements. With true underground elan, American experimental film has perverted these tried-and-true methods of appreciation. Since roughly 1972 (the last two decades) the refrain echoing from all corners of the art-culture establishment has been that ‘avant-garde’ or ‘experimental’ film is dead, a thing of the past, or at best survives weakly in the aftermath of its previous “Golden Age.” Critics who wrote seriously about experimental film in earlier years as well as those who came of age studying work by major figures of the ’50s and ’60s helped perpetrate this myth by dismissing all but a few new films and artists, chosen as tokens because their aesthetic was easily recognizable or because they had obvious socio-political cachet.

In fact, nothing has been farther from the truth. The past 20 years have seen an explosion of remarkable films which expanded the range, deepened the subtlety of expression, and often surpassed the artistic expression of the earlier generations’ “masterworks.” Ironically, it is just those sanctified but still creative filmmakers from the so-called “Golden Years” who have most painfully experienced this blanket disregard—their newest (and in many cases most mature) works have likewise been summarily dismissed. As Stan Brakhage recently said “There is no question that the films made during the last 10 years have surpassed even the work produced during the ’60s.” But no one here has noticed.

Why this neglect? The sexy novelty of avant-garde or “underground” films had worn off by the early 1970s; early breakthroughs in subject and technique (uses of found-footage, hand-manipulating film material, optical-printing, using one’s private life as a creative springboard, exploiting controversial taboo subjects, exploring formal properties for aesthetic experience, etc.) became familiar and absorbed into the larger media culture; a rigid canon of ‘great’ directors had been established by Jonas Mekas and his cohorts in New York City and had been accepted around the world; films were becoming more difficult to make and exhibit, and remained useless as collectable commodities; America had begun a conservative backlash (as evidenced by the Nixon years) that met no resistance from the exhausted and confused ‘counter-culture’; and the very existence and value of an *avant-garde* itself was under attack. Because of these reasons, there were no emerging filmmaking ‘stars’ or even members of the established filmmaking elite who felt empowered to shoot their mouths off and take center stage with the colorful flamboyance reminiscent of such luminaries as Markopolous, Brakhage, Anger, J. Smith, H. Smith, Jacobs, Sharits, Conner or Mekas himself during the Golden ’60s.

There have been some ambitious curatorial endeavors, especially during recent years, that rejected this perception of barrenness by embracing new avant-garde films with enthusiasm. David Schwartz of the American Museum of the Moving Image mounted an extraordinary 54 program series in 1988 titled *Independent America, 1978-1988*. Nelly Voorhuis curated a strong package of 33 films and film performances, *A Passage Illuminated: The American Avant-garde Film, 1980-1990*, which toured the Netherlands in 1990. Most recently, Austrian filmmakers Martin Arnold and Peter Tscherkassky curated *Unknown Territories: American Independent Film* for a festival held in Vienna during June 1992, an insightful series of 9 programs containing 40 films that offered an overview of some of the best American experimental films produced in these years. As Artistic Director of the San Francisco Cinematheque, I was invited to curate three programs for the festival and advise them in their other selections.

Although this brief series couldn't represent the creative breadth of even the few filmmakers who were included, let alone the many others who were left out because of pragmatic constraints or aesthetic preference, it did illuminate many striking developments in American *avant-garde* cinema:

- **super-8 & other 'home' formats as serious art**—The humble, fragile, and cheap home-movie gauge attracted numerous filmmakers (despite and to some measure because of its crude technology) to embrace and articulate its special aesthetic qualities. Major new voices were drawn to this professionally dismissed medium, making it the major outlet for their creative expression. Other renowned artists and filmmakers were drawn to super-8's immediacy and intimacy, creating numerous substantial works. All of them worked in the face of critical and curatorial disdain, but they succeeded in producing a body of vibrant films which pulsed with the hand of the individual in ways unseen since the days of Marie Menken and Brakhage's early work. Super-8mm's demise now seems imminent (thanks to Kodak), but new films will continue to be made until stock is completely unavailable, and there has been a spirited rise in the creative use of 8mm video and video Pixelvision.

- **rise of women filmmakers** — Aside from two early American pioneers (Maya Deren and Marie Menken), the few women making experimental films prior to the 1970s tended to be undervalued relative to their male counterparts. Carolee Schneemann, Barbara Rubin, Storm De Hirsch, Gunvor Nelson and Chick Strand all made invaluable but generally ignored contributions during the 1960s. Women filmmakers have now emerged as a dominant force over the past two decades. Although their concerns have varied to extend well beyond gender issues, many are overtly concerned with their position as women and have addressed their experiences in their work. Women have emerged aggressively to assert themselves as artists and radical filmmakers and have grasped an equal role in today's film culture.

- **confronting traditional genres and conventions** — Unlike our European counterparts, American *avant-garde* filmmakers have historically denied and stood in opposition to conventional genres and forms. This defiance led to a clarity of purpose and urgency which produced the astonishing body of 'pure cinema' masterworks of the '60s. Many newer filmmakers have boldly engaged mainstream forms and values, and in typical American fashion, have rudely taken the familiar far beyond propriety. Others drew inspiration from past masters but developed their own idioms in new and compelling fashion.

- **intensified creativity by established figures** — New breakthrough work by filmmakers whose earlier achievements were lauded have mostly gone unnoticed. Stan Brakhage, whose *Mothlight*, *Dog Star Man*, and *Window Water Baby Moving* are in museums throughout the world has produced a body of films over the past ten years that staggers credulity for its volume, thematic and stylistic range, and unprecedented mastery. Many others have remained creatively vital, expanding and enriching their art, including artists like Ernie Gehr, Gunvor Nelson, Yvonne Rainer, and Ken Jacobs, among the many others who have continued to create new marvels that give the lie to the belief that theirs is a moribund generation.

For the first time in my nearly 25 years as filmmaker, curator and teacher, the American experimental or *avant-garde* film might in fact prove to be in crisis. Costs are skyrocketing, lab services are deteriorating, and many have begun working with alternative (or additional) mediums such as video. One thing however, is clear. Artists will continue to be excited by the moving image, and by the film medium in particular, until raw stock and projectors no longer exist.

Steve Anker/San Francisco, April 7, 1992

Originally written for Blimp magazine, #20, Summer 1992, to accompany *Unknown Territories: American Independent Film*

1991 Program Notes

DANCE OF RIDDLES: NEW BY STAN BRAKHAGE
Program I

Sunday, February 3, 1991

Three Hand-painted films: *Nightmusic* (1986); *Rage Net* (1988); *The Glaze of Cathexis* (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes.

***The Riddle of Lumen* (1972); 16mm, color, silent, 14 minutes.**

***Passage Through: A Ritual* (1990); 16mm, color, sound by Philip Corner, 50 minutes.**

The classical riddle was meant to be heard, of course. Its answers are contained within its questions; and on the smallest piece of itself this possibility depends upon SOUND — “utterly,” like they say...the pun its pivot. Therefore, my *Riddle of Lumen* depends upon qualities of LIGHT. All films do, of course. But with *The Riddle of Lumen*, “the hero” of the film is light/itself. It is a film I’d long wanted to make — inspired by the sense, and the specific formal possibilities, of the classical English language riddle...only one appropriate to film and, thus, as distinct from language as I could make it.

—Stan Brakhage, note for *The Riddle of Lumen*

The Riddle of Lumen is made up of some two hundred shots which seemingly refuse any linear or hierarchical reading. Each shot appears to be of no more or no less importance than any other. Some shots are shorter than others, some longer; some contain movement while others are static. The idiosyncratic nature of the different shots, the different camera stocks, textures, granular composition, colors, the flash frames, flares, and variants of focus; all are apparently subsumed to a level of equality if not necessarily equanimity. The “riddle” is laid out with a poker face that claims impartiality.

While it is true that the lexicon Brakhage employs in *The Riddle of Lumen* is solely a visual one, and that he may have succeeded in making a film “as distinct from” (one needs to interject here *verbal*) “language” as he could make it, the space wherein the film ultimately unfolds — the viewer’s mind — cannot be pinned down as a fixed site incapable of different readings, especially the one where “language” and signs play the biggest part, narrative.

The second shot of *The Riddle of Lumen* is of a padlock. Though brief, this somewhat foggy and obscure image can define the film (if one wants it to). It is accompanied — or brought to the viewer — by a dramatic forward lunge of the camera, a movement of in-your-face violence seemingly out of character with the tenor of the film as a whole. The shot’s importance is not however its capacity to viscerally catapult the viewer forward, but rather the intellectual movement *back*, out of the film, that one experiences. The viewer moves from the *primarily* visual space of the film to the — as Brakhage has set it up — antithetical literary space of the title, inscribed just a few seconds before in black leader. Lock...key...solution...riddle — one reading (among many) of one shot (among many). While the film (and Brakhage in his note quoted above) tries to establish *light* and the textures that light reveals as its content (read: “hero”), individual shots like that of the padlock ultimately derail the rather suspect notion of a singular protagonist progressing through a non-linear and non-literary non-narrative.

Though the film is held together graphically by a tenuous network of visual associations, the film — or better yet, the images that make up the film — can never slough off the narrative(s) it/they are embedded in. Brakhage’s valiant resistance to what Hollis Frampton referred to as the “house of the word,” his dream of the untutored eye of the child (“Imagine a world unruled by man-made laws of perception...”), in *The Riddle of Lumen* meet up with

(and not in opposition to) an equally strong and immovable tendency for the viewer to make meaning (stories) from even the most minimal of images.

It was with a minimal number of images that Brakhage constructed *Passage Through: A Ritual*, an equally dense though vastly different film that is very ambiguous in its relationship towards light. The film was occasioned by Brakhage receiving a tape of Philip Corner's *Through the Mysterious Barricades, Lumen (after F. Couperin)* and subsequently deciding to "set it to film." According to Corner, the composition had been inspired by a viewing of *The Riddle of Lumen*.

Both in their number and in what they convey on a representational level, the images of *Passage Through* are sparse. Yet paradoxically it is this paucity of imagery that gives the film its strength. As in *The Riddle of Lumen*, there is a level of equality established between the images, but it is not something translatable into levels of value. Again, a delicate balance is struck between significance and insignificance. The lack of imagery on the one hand leads the viewer to be generous in its affording of value to each image, while at the same time, suspect of any such value at all. The gaps between images are pregnant spaces full of anticipation and apprehension. There is no basis for security. Each image becomes precious. Corner's composition, instead of occupying a constant, stable position, further contributes to the feeling of groundlessness with its abstraction, its tentativeness, and even the tension between its source (a Couperin piano piece) and itself.

—Notes by Kurt Easterwood

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS

Tuesdays, February 5— March 26, 1991

From the beginning of film history, when photographers like Louis Lumiere and Eadweard Muybridge helped to invent the motion picture medium, to the Film and Photo League of the Thirties, to the present day and contemporary artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, John Baldessari and Susan Meiselas, film has proved to be an enduring attraction to those whose main form of expression has been the still image.

Given the two mediums' shared use of the camera and photo-chemical processes, this "crossing-over" is perhaps not surprising. And yet, it is probably the inherent difference between the two mediums—photography being the image stolen from time, film the projection of those twenty-four images each second, in time—that has stimulated certain photographers to explore the possibilities of making images move.

Some of the films in the series represent the only known film work by their makers, as is the case with Harry Callahan or Brassai. Other works, however, are examples from certain artists who left photography to concentrate primarily on filmmaking, like Robert Frank and Hollis Frampton. In all, this seven-program series of films by photographers is wide-ranging in scope, traversing the length of film history and exhibiting a host of divergent concerns. The series provides an opportunity to see many rare and neglected works, as well as to reassess the careers of many of this century's visual artist.

The shows will run on consecutive Tuesday evenings during the months of February and March (with the exception of March 12).

Presented in collaboration with San Francisco Camerawork and the San Francisco Art Institute.

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS
Program I: Surrealistic Tendencies

Tuesday, February 5, 1991

This program traces how film, since its inception, has attracted photographers with its capacity to abstract and subvert photographic representation.

Tonight's program includes:

Louis and Auguste Lumière
(all b/w, silent, each less than one minute)

Boat Leaving Port (1895)

Lion (1896)

Feeding the Baby (1895)

The Wood Cutters (1896)

The Hoser and the Hosed (1895)

Russian Dance (1896)

The Painting Contest (1896)

Charge of the Cuirassiers (1896)

Dragoons Crossing the Saone (1896)

Mounting a Horse (1897)

Le Retour A La Raison (1923), by Man Ray; 16mm, b&w, silent, 3 minutes.

L'Etoile De Mer (1928), by Man Ray; 16mm, b&w, silent, 15 minutes.

Lichtspiel: Schwarz Weiss Grau (Lightplay: Black White Gray) (1930), by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy; 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes.

H2O (1929), by Ralph Steiner; 16mm, b&w, silent, 15 minutes.

Mechanical Principles (1931), by Ralph Steiner; 16mm, b&w, silent, 9 minutes.

Motions (1947), by Harry Callahan; 16mm, b&w, silent, 9 minutes.

Tant Qu'il Y Aura Des Betes (Lovers and Clowns) (1957), by Brassai; 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes.

Navel and A-Bomb (1960), by Eikoh Hosoe; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes.

Blue Monday (1988), by Robert Breer and William Wegman; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes.

FACT AND FANTASY: ARTIST'S SELF-PORTRAITS
Films by Anne Robertson and Su Friedrich

Thursday, February 7, 1991

* * *

This evening the Cinematheque presents the first of four programs occasioned by the forthcoming publication of *Cinematograph*, Volume 4. The programs are intended to reflect and expand upon issues addressed in the volume.

particularly in relation to the question, Is there such a thing as non-fiction cinema? Both of tonight's filmmakers, Anne Robertson and Su Friedrich, are represented in Volume 4, the former in an interview with Scott MacDonald, the latter with the text of the narration for *Sink or Swim*.

* * *

Apologies (1983-90), by Anne Robertson; Super-8mm, color, sound, 17 minutes.

Sink or Swim (1990), by Su Friedrich; 16mm, b&w, sound, 48 minutes.

What has been termed the "diary" film has long been the province of male filmmakers of the American avant-garde such as Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, who with many others — and we can add here the heavily mythologized home-movie maker, whom it goes without saying was almost exclusively the father of the house — created heartfelt documents of the families, friends and events big and small that made up their lives.

By hiding behind a hand-held, handcrafted sensibility which privileged the humble aspirations of the amateur (both in name *and* style), these diarists were able to corner the market on both truth and subjectivity. Casualness signified not only that the subjects of these films (the families, friends, et al.) were complicit in their making, but that the man with the movie camera was implicated as well. But what these films, and those critics that triumphed their existence, seemed to ignore was the implicit dominance of the filmmaker over his subject matter. The subjectivity of the image-making was taken at face value as truth, rather than as the making of subjects constructed in his image. The personal was political without him ever knowing it.

Anne Robertson's *Apologies* and Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* are both self-portraits with links to the diaristic strain of American avant-garde filmmaking. Yet both films are also attempts to break away from the phallogocentric grip of that tradition, to critique its assumptions about whose eye beholds truth and objectivity. While it is dangerous to generalize (and gender-ize) the differences between (as well as among) a past generation of filmmakers and those of today, it is not insignificant that these two films are made by women. Historically the mute object of male filmmakers' desires and not a speaking subject, women — along with other marginalized groups — have had the most to gain by blurring the distinctions between concepts such as documentary and fiction and by dislodging the master's voice.

Both of these films deal with subjects of extreme personal significance to each maker, but do so in ways which open out, allowing the viewer to enter into the experience. There is a vulnerability implied in the filmmaking which doesn't slip into solipsism nor simply become grist for the liberal quilt mill which will only consume it and then churn it out, to be forgotten.

On first glance, Robertson could be seen to fall in line with the Romanticism that informs many filmmakers of the past (and not a few today) with her grandiose claims for film as a life-saving force. Robertson: "Sometimes the act of taking a picture every day has kept me sane. I believe in it. I have to take a picture every day." A manic-depressive, Robertson has obsessively recorded her life on film since the early 80's. (Her *Diary* is now over 40 hours long.) Filming when not under hospitalization or excess medication, her *Diary* is a catalogue of her everyday life, environment and obsessions. Eating disorders, suicidal impulses, guilt complexes, the effects of various drugs — all are explored by Robertson openly in the *Diary*.

Apologies, which is both a separate film and part of the larger *Diary*, presents Robertson at several different points and moods within its 17 minutes. Consistent throughout the work, however, is a confrontational stance, manifested most explicitly in her direct address of the viewer by looking and talking into the camera. Within this strategy Robertson occupies several different positions or modes of address, ranging from a series of short scenes of Robertson against a green backdrop to more (seemingly) casual set-ups such as Robertson on her porch or driving a car.

For the most part, we *hear* Robertson in synchronous relationship to the image. Her voiceover maintains this level of directness even when Robertson is not speaking into the camera, as when she films herself against a mirror or sits in profile several feet away from the camera. Because her microphone also serves as the mechanism by which she turns the camera on and off, the usual distance between the act of recording and editing are collapsed, just as the film collapses the larger distinction between creator and subject.

Robertson's obsessive explorations of her self confront acceptable limits of self-revelation at the same time as they confront the viewer. Instead of remaining on the outside looking in, like a human at a zoo, the viewer is drawn into Robertson's life. One is made a part of the construction(s) Robertson is weaving. That Robertson's different sep-ups are all staged and overdetermined is in part where their power ultimately resides — they are all fictions struggling to reconcile themselves into truth(s).

In contrast to Robertson's frontal, aggressive self-portrait, Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim* is a measured, distant reflection of her relationship with her father. Though the stories on which the film is based are autobiographical, Friedrich chose to have them read in the third person by a 13-year old girl. She also organized the stories into a structure based on a backwards reading of the alphabet (Z-A).

Friedrich's use of a formal structuring element and third person narration affords her not only the distance needed to tackle the complexities to a diverse range of people who might otherwise feel unable to identify with Friedrich's personal experience.

In earlier works such as *Gently Down the Stream* (1981), *But No One* (1982) and especially *The Ties That Bind* (1984), a film about her mother, Friedrich used direct scratching of words onto the film surface to re-position her first-person voice. This aural to visual transliteration engendered a mode of reading on the part of the viewer which brought he/she in closer "sync" with Friedrich. This is especially true of the scratched-on questions to her mother in *The Ties That Bind*, where their childlike appearance and naive tone positioned Friedrich as the child wanting to know at the same time that it reinforced our identification with Friedrich/that child.

While Friedrich has abandoned the scratched-on text in *Sink or Swim*, her use of a young girl to narrate her stories functions on a similar level. It relocates the authoritarian, omniscient voice within someone usually denied any voice at all, let alone one that may know the score. Implicit in all this is a critique of the self-perpetuating way children are treated by society as unwitting innocents vulnerable to being molded by parents in their image. A poignant example of this within the film is the citing of a poem by Friedrich's father where he writes about his newborn child (Su Friedrich) and how her "quiet face" has replaced his sister who had drowned in their youth. Here memory inscribes itself into the present.

The stories that are read throughout the film are not simply reenacted in the accompanying imagery. Indeed, there is very little in the way of a one-to-one correlation between sound and image. Instead what one hears and sees often appears quite distinct from one another, related only by slim metaphorical associations or symbolic connections. Yet the ability of the images to inform the stories, to open up multiple channels of meaning (and truths, if you will) between the two, is where the strength of *Sink or Swim* lies. It is also here that Friedrich breaks down the traditional mode of documentary film practice whereby either sound or image toes the line of the other in the name of objectivity.

Just as Friedrich attempts to work with, around and against formal conventions, so too does *Sink or Swim* grapple with the larger, systemic and gendered questions that lead to/arise from such conventions. In trying to find some answers, Friedrich doesn't opt for a one-dimensional accusatory pointing of the finger, but rather for an open-ended airing out of the questions. Her home-movie is not a inventory list of her problems, an us versus them catalogue. It is an attempt to meet her father half way, trying to balance her very personal and subjective feelings with some objective understanding.

SMALL FORMAT REPORTAGE: EXPOSING THE NEWS
Works by Luis Buñuel, Bill Stamets and the 8mm Video Collective

Saturday, February 9, 1991

This evening the Cinematheque presents the second of four programs occasioned by the publication of Cinematograph, Volume 4. The programs are intended to reflect and expand upon issues addressed in the volume, particularly in relation to the question, Is there such a thing as non-fiction cinema? The three works on tonight's program are each featured in essays included in Volume 4.

* * *

Land Without Bread (Las Hurdes; Terre Sans Pain) (1932), by Luis Buñuel; 16mm, b&w, sound, 27 minutes.

"Why is *Land Without Bread* so disturbing? Why does it startle, perplex and confuse? I think the answer is that it sounds like truth, looks like truth, but evades our certainty of truth. It creates this uncertainty through its language, particularly its adjectives, its tone, and sentence structures that work in a series of progressively mounting reversals. It upends our cherished positions of tragedy and pity. It makes pity a specious alibi for non-action. We are confronted in this film with an insupportable norm and the normal response will not suffice. We are angered, frustrated, humored, and engaged. Each proposition turns in butts and nots. Buñuel's strategies and syntax are only a small if precise insult to the common range of the horrible, the cruel, the unfortunate events in the world and in cinema. The true limit is the horror of the real".

—Abigail Child, from "Truth Serum", Cinematograph, Vol. 4 (1991).

Novo Dextro: Purity and Danger (1982), by Bill Stamets; Super-8mm, color, sound, 33 minutes.

"*Man With a Movie Camera, Report, Titicut Follies, Governor, Shoah, and Sherman's March* all manipulate the genres of factuality. These works can outfit viewers with new critiques for their daily intake of facts. Other filmmakers can emulate the reflexive aims of these experiments and can note their relative superiority as documents. I am guessing that Max Weber's dictum for social science fits documentary filmmaking: both strive to transform subjective reality into objective factuality. The real as felt, thought, lived by unique individuals in history is interpreted by ethnographies made of words and documentaries made of images.

"The trouble with theory is it never makes life worth living nor films worth making. (Theory is big fun, though.) What in the world other people do in life does make for good filmmaking. I find the theater of politics a particularly apt site for tracking the public spectacle of making life meaningful through power. Politicians are our paradigm of citizen-existentialists. TV ads are another articulation of our transient collective identity and operate much like our politician-celebrities. If avant-garde endorses any political motive nowadays, then makers of the experimental documentary might consider critiques of the machinery of political imagery and the news industry's homogeneity.

"'Experimental' newsreels might someday empower audiences outside the art world to eat their news of the day with new repertoires of devices. Unlike the ongoing mutation of styles and appliances in the marketplace of so-called 'goods,' there is not any profit-motivated diversity or evolution of interpretive devices for resisting the current of mainstream news. In the mediaplace of 'ideas' I vote for these experiments as documentaries worth making."

—Bill Stamets

News Diaries, Part 3: Death of the News (1990), by the 8mm News Collective; 3/4" videotape, sound, 29 minutes.

"*News Diaries* is a three-part experimental documentary series produced for public-access TV examining the ways in which television news is manufactured in Buffalo, NY. The *News Diaries* utilize an eclectic, confrontational style in order to challenge the assumptions of the television news enterprise: objectivity; truthfulness; professionalism and adherence to production values which are equated not simply with credibility, but also coded as congruent with 'familiarity' and 'familial values', compelling the uncritical trust and loyalty of an homogeneous viewing audience."

—8mm News Collective

Framing Cinema: A Re-presentation

Sunday, February 10, 1991, 5 p.m.

Chumlum (1964), by Ron Rice; 16mm, color, sound, 26 minutes.

Rose Hobart (1939), by Joseph Cornell; 16mm, b&w (tinted), sound on tape, 20 minutes.

Kunst Life I-III (1975), by Roger Jacoby; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes.

NON-FICTION CINEMA??

New Forms, New Works, New Thoughts
A Panel Discussion Moderated by Jack Walsh

Sunday, February 10, 1991

Tonight's panel continues discussions raised in *Cinematograph* Volume 4 on questions of fact, fiction, politics and experiment in contemporary media. Panelists include five prominent Bay Area media artists: Steve Fagin, Lynn Kirby, Loni Ding, Marlon Riggs, Jack Walsh.

"Debates have raged in recent years concerning the non-fiction films—a rubric encompassing such diverse practices as traditional documentary form and experimental filmmaking. In documentary, a clear trajectory can be traced from a position of objective truth, through point-of-view, to subjectivity and autobiographic filmmaking as a counter practice to the dominant forms of documentary and narrative film.

"As a media artist, where would you place your work in relation to these issues? Please think about how your work does or does not work within these categories. How has your own social, cultural, and/or political position influenced your work? Do you have an intended audience or a particular community you are addressing in your work?"

"In thinking about these issues please feel free to bring in other contemporary issues such as aesthetics, activism, post-modernism, experimentation, multiculturalism, gender, sexuality, race and/or class."

—Jack Walsh

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS
Program II: Visions of America

Tuesday, February 12, 1992

Each of the five films in this program takes a distinctive approach to portraying different aspects of American life.

Tonight's program includes:

Manhatta (also known as *New York The Magnificent*) (1921), by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler; 16mm, b&w, silent, 9 minutes.

Valley Town: A Study of Machines and Men (1940), by Willard Van Dyke; 16mm, b&w, sound, 35 minutes.

Weegee's New York (1948), by Weegee; 16mm, color, sound, 20 minutes.

Diary of a Harlem Family (1968), by Gordon Parks; 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes

Beauty Knows No Pain (1971), by Elliot Erwitt; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes.

HARD/SOFT (love) - A VALENTINE SHOW
Curated by Peggy Ahwesh, Barbara Hammer & Mark Taylor

Thursday, February 14, 1991

Take Me Tonight (1988), by Lewis Klahr; Super-8mm, color, sound, 3 minutes

Drawn & Quartered (1986), by Lynne Sachs; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes

Melissa's Lullaby (1990), by Kerry Fefer; 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes

Human on My Faithless Arm (1987), by Valerie Terezsko; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes

Untitled (The Red Film), by John Sabo; 16mm, color, sound, 4 minutes.

Jabock (1967), by Tom Chomont; 16mm, b&w, silent at 16 f.p.s., 3 minutes.

9/64: O Tannenbaum—Materialaktion Otto Mühl (1964), by Kurt Kren; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes.

This Is What We Do to Dogs (1990), by Jayne Austen; 16mm, b&w, silent at 16 f.p.s., 12 minutes.

Nadja Yet (1983), by Anne Flournoy; 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes.

Dreams of Passion (1990), by Aarin Burch; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes.

The Male Gayze, by Jack Waters; 16mm, color, sound on cassette, 10 minutes.

CHICANA STRATEGIES
Curated by Lourdes Portillo
Introduced by Luz Castillo

Saturday, February 16, 1991

Tonight's program is drawn from the *U.S. Latina Strategies* tour, which highlights the work of Chicanas in film and video. Lourdes Portillo has observed that "what has been notable in the resurgence of Chicano Film and Video in the 1990s is the presence of women working in non-traditional directions. These artists are trying to get at more subtle issues of identity and subjectivity through non-narrative strategies." In tackling these issues, Chicana filmmakers face the double challenge of countering "two kinds of aesthetics: the dominant culture's which has distorted the Chicana subject, and the aesthetics of Chicano males that 'render [Chicanas] nameless and voiceless'." (Rosa Linda Fregosa) Tonight's program is a tribute to the many strategies with which Chicana women have faced these and other challenges.

Replies of the Night (1989), by Sandra P. Ramos Hahn; 1/2" videotape, 10 minutes.

An experimental video poem dedicated to the director's grandfather that explores the "...almost universal practice of ritual rites marking respect for the dead..." (text from the video).

Anima (1989), by Frances Salome Espana; 3/4" videotape, 5 minutes.

An electronic video poem that depicts the Mexican Day of the Dead ritual. Her experimental style creates a "...ritualized rendition of a ritual..." (Rosa Linda Fregosa)

Reaching Out, by Eloise Deleon; 3/4" videotape, 22 minutes.

"A personal exploration of internalized racism" is the sub-title to this video which raises issues that include identity, assimilation, and cultural tradition.

Agueda Martinez : Our People, Our Country (1977), by Esperanza Esparza; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes.

A portrait of a seventy-seven year old woman of Navajo-Mexican descent. "Esparza's portrayal of struggle in a woman's daily-life existence, represents...a counter-aesthetics and a counter discourse to... 'predominantly masculine interpretations of history and culture'..." (Rosa Linda Fregosa)

Not Because Fidel Says So, by Graciela Sanchez; 3/4" videotape, 15 minutes.

This documentary of homosexual life in Cuba investigates homosexuality and homophobia, predominantly through the use of interviews.

Mujeria: The Olmeca Rap (1989), by T. Osa Hidalgo de la Riva; 3/4" videotape, 3 minutes.

An animated music video that uses the modern form of rap to re-present the ancient Olmeca culture.

BETH B/GRETA SNIDER

Both Artists in person

Sunday, February 17, 1991

Beth B began making transgressive Super-8mm films in the Punk Underground with Scott B, Lydia Lunch and others. She has been described as having been surprised by reactions to the violence portrayed in her films, "compared to Rambo, I feel like I'm making children's movies.... I try to talk about situations in which violence emerges as an uncontrollable urge, raising question of power and intensity in relationships between individuals."
—B.B.

Belladonna (1989), by Beth B and Ida Applebroog; 3/4" videotape, 13 minutes.

"In this piece we tried to bring the idea of violence across in a more personal way.... Some people find the tape very distorting, other people find it humorous. I think those reactions are a reflection of how people feel about violence nowadays." —B.B.

"The co-directors make mincemeat of their subjects, cutting them up into a frenzied rhythm of fragmented statements."

—Elizabeth Hess

"Cut and collaged together, their comments create a narrative vividly depicting a composite of contemporary human consciousness at war with itself."

—Joseph De Mattia

Beth B collaborated with her mother, painter Ida Applebroog, on this not-so-ordinary-talking-head video. They play with the audience's expectations and programmed ways of receiving information through the media, immersing us, through rhythm and style, in anticipation, desire, anxiety, confusion, fear, and violence. Structure and message (opens question more than offers answers) dance and wrestle together, seducing us and shocking us, bringing the pieces together and blowing them apart again.

American Nightmare (1985); 1/2" videotape, 4 minutes.

Thanatopsis (1991); 3/4" videotape, 11 minutes.

Beth B and Lydia Lunch meet up on familiar and common ground: violence-meets-sex. This spoken-word video, reminiscent of music videos, travels through Lydia Lunch's thoughts of death and killing, making connections across histories, cultures, people (Nazis, Marcos, Nicaragua, Brighton, Belfast, Bush, Iran, Iraq), building to (or exposing at the core) a complex and confrontational link. Stylized color shots of Lunch as performer in direct address close-up are intercut with a black and white narrative of her climbing into a private space where she removes her stage, or public presence (or does she?).

* * *

Greta Snider, one of San Francisco's exciting young filmmakers, will show "films which confront the disparity between what is allowed to be spoken and what is believed."

—Claire Dannenbaum

Hard Core Home Movie (1989); Super-8mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes.

"*Hard Core* is a frank and irreverent documentary which asks the question 'what is hard core?'. Seedy, grainy and fast-paced, this is a nostalgic look at an ephemeral moment in the history of a sub-culture: punk rock in San

Francisco in the late eighties. Everyone from fucked-up teenagers to elderly Mexican tourists attempt to explain the allure and mystique of the scene. Filmed at S.F.'s historical petting-zoo/theatre/punk rock emporium, The Farm." (G.S.)

Futility (1989); 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes.

"*Futility*'s narrative is told in two disarmingly honest and person voice-overs, with images reprinted from found and archival footage. The first section is a woman's story about a pregnancy and subsequent difficulties in scheduling an abortion. The second is a moribund love letter read by the same narrator. The images are never an illustration of the voice-over, nor do they constitute a narrative of their own, but blow in and out randomly, constituting a kind of peripheral vision. The film's severe economy of means provides a startling contrast to the unity and characterological nature of the soundtrack." (G.S.)

Blood Story 1990); 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes.

"*Blood Story* is a simultaneous progression of three divergent tales; a soundtrack of eavesdropped 'girltalk,' a subtitled story of a troublesome spot, and a series of images which fluidly peruse the two. The pictures articulate the space between one threatening, and one intimate, experience of the same symbolic matter." (G.S.)

Mute (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 14 minutes.

"*Mute* is an irresolute web of shifting power positions. It is a malevolent bedtime story whose focal character, while deviating herself from the grip of the narration, firmly maintains her ambivalence toward her state of menace. Included is subtitled information, which is the running contrapuntal perspective of the 'other,' the mute. This commentary blossoms out of the long silent sections, from a discussion of her own involuntary objectification to her problematic 'fascination' with a foreign culture," (G.S.)

—Notes by Susanne Fairfax

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS

Program III: Street Scenes

Tuesday, February 19, 1992

These three films from the early 1950's each draws on the gritty vibrancy of the urban environments they depict to create compelling and compassionate portraits of city life.

Tonight's program includes:

In the Street (1952), by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb and James Agee; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes.

Under the Brooklyn Bridge (1953), by Rudy Burckhardt; 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes.

Little Fugitive (1953), by Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin; 16mm, b&w, sound, 75 minutes.

**THE DELIRIOUS AROUSAL OF DESTRUCTION, OR:
IS THERE A FEMINIST EROTIC ICONOGRAPHY**

A Text/Slide Event

Media Artist Carolee Schneemann in Person

Thursday, February 21, 1991

Carolee Schneemann is an internationally known painter, performance artist, filmmaker, and writer who treats controversial themes such as sexuality, feminist history, and the body as a source of knowledge. Using her own work as an experimental base, Schneemann addresses issues of perception and power. Her illuminations of the transgressive and denied aspects of the unconscious mind, nature, gender, and sexuality emerge in vivid contrast to our learned aesthetic. She deconstructs and inverts the traditionally idealized erotic subject/object relationship by positing primal rhythms of intuitive and body-based histories.

In her slide/text performance, Schneemann will trace the history of her visual work as a painter working with extended materials—from canvas into space. Schneemann investigates how the energy of her constructed works relate to that of her performed works created in parallel over the past three decades.

Interwoven into her ongoing inquiry, Schneemann relates the symbols and artifacts of ancient Goddess cultures as confirming the energy behind the eroticism and imaging of her work. Her discussion of the contemporaneous destruction of the Aphrodite sites and shrines by the military actions in Sumer and Mesopotamia is coupled with an urgent need in Western culture to physicalize and identify with the sacred erotic. A wide range of images on slides, ranging from Paleolithic shards, Sumerian birth figurines, and Victorian Madonnas, to contemporary Body Art illustrates the lecture.

—Notes by Crosby McCloy

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN: FILMS AND VIDEOS

Media Artist Carolee Schneemann in Person

Saturday, February 23, 1991

Fuses (1965); 16mm, color, silent, 23 minutes.

Viet-Flakes (1966); 16mm, b&w tinted, sound on tape, 11 minutes.

Plumb Line (1971); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes.

Carl Ruggles' Christmas Breakfast (1966); video.

Also included in the program are three video portraits of Schneemann by Victoria Vesna, Maria Beatty, and Anna Korotki.

Carolee Schneemann, internationally acclaimed as a painter, performance artist, filmmaker, and writer offers us a program of controversial works. Schneemann's work addresses our conceptions of gender, sexuality, and

feminist history. Her use of the body as an extension of the artistic medium locates intuitive channels of self-discovery and essential sources of knowledge within the body itself. This gesture radicalized definitions of what is considered to be appropriate or taboo in the bedroom and in the art world. Her vision reflects the hope in Schneemann's words that, "an equitable fusion of female and male sensibility will automatically include our pronouns, our genitals, and our art."

In addition to "sharing a concern with gesture, movement and duration with all performance artists, male or female," Henry Sayre wrote that, "Schneemann's images possess an extra dimension—that is, they possess history. They are part and parcel of history, actively engaged with it in a particular way. They are, in short, actively feminist." Her work exerts pressure on assumptions along many levels of meaning: political, spiritual, personal, and historical. The connections made to ancient Goddess—based imagery with Schneemann's work reminds us of a physical heritage which is frequently disavowed or untapped as part of our cultural resources. The incorporation of her body as visual territory in her art offers us a new map for articulations of distinctly female explorations in art and eroticism. By bringing these links to consciousness, Schneemann suggests threads of possibilities for change.

Ruby Rich describes Schneemann's treatment of film material in *Fuses* as "transcending the surfaces of sex to communicate its true spirit, its meaning as an activity for herself, and quite accurately, women in general..." Her tactile use of the film celluloid as an extension of her intimate relationship with James Tenney merges the process of filmmaking with their act of lovemaking. Schneemann shapes her film to appropriate it organically to its subject matter—as the use of slow motion or the way that one image seems to search for the next is reflective of desire in *Fuses*. Through the subtle manipulation of the film medium (for instance, by painting directly onto the frames or by the inclusion of repeated stills in *Plumb Line*), Schneemann speaks of how eroticism is generated and how nostalgia and memory shape our thoughts or overlay our experience.

Schneemann describes *Viet-Flakes* as "composed from an obsessive collection of Vietnam atrocity images I collected from foreign magazines and newspapers over a five year period. The camera 'travels' within the photographs producing a rough animation—images in and out of focus, broken rhythms, perceptual contradictions combine with a disconcerting sound collage which intercuts Vietnamese religious chants and secular songs, fragments of Bach and the 'Top of the Charts'."

The inner worlds created in Schneemann's films are cohesively crafted out of her felt and lived experience. They come into being as sincere expressions of her actual situations. Inside of her persistent delving into quotidian occurrences for her politics, or intimate relationships for her sexuality, she unearths insightful readings of our cultural and social taboos. What might at first seem insular explodes into the public realm.

In her life-work, she is both creator and created, the object of desire and the desiring subject. She belies and inhabits both positions at once to craft a newly seen definition of herself as an artist and as a woman. Her theory of vulvic space is based on the idea of space as complete as from the inside out, reversible and convertible, rather than as signifying lack or absence. She seems to accept Irigaray's wager that, "beneath all these/her appearances, beneath all these/her borrowings and artifices, this other still sub-sists. Beyond all these/her forms of life or of death, still alive." Schneemann's work attempts to offer a sub connotative image, stripped of projections, of visceral immediate intensity.

An important distinction about this line of questioning is her refusal to try to "define" woman or to answer the question of difference within difference. In an address delivered at the Telluride Film Festival in 1977, she expresses that her aspirations are not "to define an 'erotic woman' for other women—the very notion immediately reverts to the traditional stereotypes which this program of films vividly counters.....Perhaps this 'erotic woman' will be seen as primitive, devouring, insatiable, clinical, obscene, or forthright, courageous, integral."

I end with a quote from an interview with Barbara Smith in *Artweek* in which Schneemann states, "I think it's much harder to have an equity in heterosexual relationships than anyone realized. If we take this as some kind of trope for the culture at large, it has something to do with the energy of reaction we're experiencing now and takes us right up to the NEA. We must encourage research in the feminist investigation of biology. The whole dismantling of patriarchal structure has transformed our culture so that it's not simply homophobic; there now exist connections between scholars of different races." Whatever diverse directions this quote might inspire, her questions challenge us to take up issues of sexual and personal freedom with ferocity and dedication.

—Notes by Crosby McCloy

Another View: Selected Works Re-Screened

Sunday, February 24, 1991, 5 p.m.

Mr. Wonderful (1988), by Tom Rhoads; Super 8mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America (1990), by Craig Baldwin; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 48 minutes.

You Talk, I Buy (1990), *HIDE: A 60 Second Spot* (1990) by Eric Saks and Pat Tierney; 3/4" videotape.

AIDS ACTIVIST VIDEO

Film/Video makers Tom Kalin and Gregg Bordowitz in person

Sunday, February 24, 1991

"Two pretentious fags from New York, Tom Kalin (lyrical filmmaker) and Gregg Bordowitz (didactic videomaker) will present videotapes about the AIDS epidemic and will then have an uproarious cat fight over representational issues such as subjective and objective conditions of struggle, identity politics and collective organization."

—T.K. & G.B.

Tapes screened tonight include excerpts from the following titles (some short tapes will be shown in their entirety):

DHPG Mon Amour (1990), by Carl M. George; Super 8mm, sound on cassette.

Stiff Sheets (1989), by John Gross

Di Ana's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Upfront (1990), by Ellen Spiro

Rockville is Burning (1988), by Robert Huff/Wave 3

Target City Hall (1989), by DIVA-TV

Keep Your Laws Off My Body (1989), by Catherine Saalfield/Zoe Leonard

Safe Sex Slut (1988), by Carol Leigh aka Scarlot Harlot

Marta: Portrait of a Teenage Activist (1990), by Matthew Ebert

The World is Sick (sic) (1989), by John Greyson

Kissing Doesn't Kill (1990), by Gran Fury

Love For Sale: Free Condoms Inside (1991), by Prostitutes of New York/Gran Fury

New York, by Gran Fury

News From Home (1987), by Tom Kalin

They are lost to vision altogether (1989), by Tom Kalin

The Feeling of Power (1990), by Robert Beck

I Object (1990), by House of Color

Safer Sex Shorts (1989-91), by Gregg Bordowitz/Jean Carlomusto for Gay Men's Health Crisis

plus a few surprises...

Tom Kalin is a video/filmmaker and writer currently working on *Swoon*, a film about boy-killers Leopold and Loeb. He is a member of the AIDS activist collective Gran Fury.

Gregg Bordowitz is an activist videomaker and writer who has been actively engaged in the struggle to end government inaction of AIDS for the past five years.

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS

Program IV: Photojournalism

Tuesday, February 26, 1991

Arising out of the tradition of the photo essay, the films in this program are each documents of countries in times of flux, trying to maintain or regain stability.

Tonight's program includes:

Eyes on Russia, From the Caucasus to Moscow (1934), by Margaret Bourke-White; 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 minutes.

Le Retour (1945), by Henri Cartier-Bresson; 16mm, b&w, sound, 34 minutes.

Living at Risk (1985), by Alfred Gussetti, Susan Meiselas and Richard Rogers; 16mm, color, sound, 59 minutes.

JAMES SIBLEY WATSON/BARBARA HAMMER
Film/video maker Barbara Hammer in person

Thursday, February 28, 1991

* * *

Sanctus (1990), by Barbara Hammer; 16mm, color, sound, 19 minutes.

Dr. Watson's X-Rays (1990), by Barbara Hammer; 3/4" videotape, 22 minutes.

Lot in Sodom (1933), by James Sibley Watson; 16mm, b&w, sound, 27 minutes.

* * *

X-Rated X-Rays: Motion Pictures by James Sibley Watson

In March of 1989 I attended a National Alliance of Media Arts Conference in Rochester, New York. One evening we were invited to the George Eastman House where Director Christopher Horak presented an evening of films from the archives. I saw for the first time *Fall of the House of Usher* (1929), by James Sibley Watson, Jr. and was astounded to find an American avant-garde filmmaker of the twenties who was so little known to me. The use of prisms, filters, sets, and optical design without reliance on a narrative background furthered my interest in learning more about Watson and his work. Furthermore, Chris had mentioned x-ray film shot by Watson in his later years when he worked in the Department of Radiology at the University of Rochester Hospital.

The next day several filmmakers and I asked for a tour of the archives. As we were passing through shelves of film cans, I saw several metallic cans labeled *Watson's X-Rays* on a shelf labeled "to be catalogued." I lifted the lid of one of the cans and saw that the film was 35 mm. I very much wanted to see all of this footage on the screen. The desire to see what hasn't been seen or is forbidden to be seen has been a long-standing compulsion for me even to the point of choosing the optical printer as a tool of choice, allowing the study of each individual film unit, the frame. Dr. Watson had a personal optical printer with a 70mm camera mounted on a lathe bed designed and constructed for his use in his second film *Lot In Sodom*. When I saw that printer I knew I wanted to rework the original x-ray footage using my own optical printer.

Luckily for me I received the necessary consent to use the footage as well as grant monies for the project. In September of 1990 I sat for three days in front of a 35mm flatbed and looked at can after silver can of medical and artistic moving x-rays. Some of the footage hadn't been seen in twenty years judging from the antique cores from which I had to respool the film before I could screen the nitrate film. I saw images describing interior organs with slow movements, side views of swallowing motions, fluids flowing through intestines, joint movements, and torso rotations. In a large can containing smaller rolls I found images of men shaving, playing instruments, someone putting on lipstick, and a skeleton sensuously rubbing a hand over a face. There was a skeleton with a camera! Apparently Dr. Watson had used the (cinemfluorographic) process of photographing the image formed by x-rays on a fluorographic screen for other than scientific purposes. I found some x-ray footage that recalled Moholy-Nagy's 16mm experiments of light reflections of moving sculptures.

Dr. Watson was not working alone; he was one of a group of men who worked together to discover and perfect the (cinemfluorographic) process. He was credited as a person who could bring a team together to work successfully to a project's completion and a gifted collaborator.

From my interviews with friends and family of the late Dr. Watson, I gained a sense of his personality. I could easily imagine that Dr. Watson had photographed x-rays of himself during the late night sessions he worked at the hospital. I knew that Dr. Watson died of cancer of the kidney 25 years earlier. This led me into an investigation of the uses and abuses of scientific information and research, in particular radiology, and the danger of working with unknowns.

I began to research the work of Marie and Pierre Curie and saw the debilitating effects of abnormally hardened fingertips and fatigue resulting from what was undoubtedly radiation sickness on Madame Curie, who believed in the harmless nature of her inquiries. I interviewed cancer patients who had both survived and were damaged by radiation. I turned to Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic* and began to see the surface gaze of visible and invisible made visible as one of many possible constructions for medicine, but the unitary one selected by scientists and philosophers of the Western World.

The clinical x-rays shift in meaning according to the use of the medical gaze, a nineteenth century phenomenon that privileged pathological anatomy. Not only was the cinefluorographic process and the resulting x-rays not the result of one man's work, but also the manner in which the x-rays were "read" was limited to a singular, rather than a multi-perceptual, approach. In my "workings" of the footage through multiple passes through the optical printer, the electronic processing of the transferred film to video image, and the juxtapositions of varied textual fragments within the image (medical, scientific, philosophic text). I am attempting to use the language of multiplicity to question the unitary concept of creation as well as the epistemology of knowledge and the scientific method.

—Notes by Barbara Hammer

THE NEURASTHENIC VIDEOSCAPES OF TONY OURSLER

Video artist Tony Oursler in person

Co-sponsored by The Living Room

Saturday, March 2, 1991

Tonight's program provides an overview of Tony Oursler's recent work made for single channel exhibition-work meant to be seen on a TV screen. His videotapes and installations create a bizarre universe, blending childlike props, miniature sets, fragmented body parts and strange optical effects into discontinuous narratives with political and psychological overtones.

"Like a theater of the mind, his videotapes provide an alternatively hilarious and terrifying window onto the process of mental digestion: video games, fairy tales, or sales pitches are swallowed whole and internalized or transformed within the psyche while others float around intact, like undigestible fragments of media roughage...the work of Oursler dramatizes the density and discontinuity of the sign, its potential to mean different things to different people..."

—David Joselit, *The Boston Phoenix*, September 7, 1990

Tonight's program includes:

Halloweened (1990); 3/4" videotape, 6 minutes.

Tunic, (Song for Karen) (1991); 3/4" videotape, 6 minutes.

Kepono Drum (1991); 3/4" videotape, 10 minutes.

**ROBBING THE GRAVEYARDS OF HISTORY:
From the Pole to the Equator and Displaced Person**

Sunday, March 3, 1991

* * *

Tonight the Cinematheque presents the fourth program of a series of four occasioned by the publication this Spring of *Cinematograph*, Volume Four, edited by Jeffrey Skoller. The programs are designed to reflect and expand upon issues addressed in the volume, particularly in relation to the question, Is there such a thing as non-fiction cinema?

* * *

Displaced Person (1981), by Daniel Eisenberg; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12.5 minutes.

"...now you raise the question of meaning without order..."

—Claude Levi-Strauss, from film narration

"In *Displaced Person*, Eisenberg sought to examine issues around the Holocaust through historical information and cultural artifacts that are available and given to all of us as 'readers' of history. Circling from the exterior in a highly individualistic way, *Displaced Person* works with a carefully chosen set of particular elements in order to explore the larger questions within the historical field. Stately and sinuous passages from a Beethoven string quartet create a complex argumentation around images and text. This music, both sympathetic and distanced, establishes rhythm and breadth in relation to a radio interview with Claude Levi-Strauss and archival footage obtained from rephotographing Marcel Ophul's *The Sorrow and the Pity*. These elements wheel through many revolutions of repetitions and combinations, forming multiple perspectives. Through recontextualization, meaning blossoms rationally and incongruously like the alleged blossoming of flowers that took place in the dead of winter in wartime Germany, brought on by the intense temperatures of exploding shells."

—Mark McElhatten, *Visions*, vol. 2, no. 3, Fall 1987

"history:
often gives us more than we bargained for,
always more that we're looking for.
a private understanding of how specific historical moments
and characters have shaped my life.
my initial impulse: if no conclusions are to be drawn perhaps
because history has too long been a domain for experts while
we allow ourselves the comfort of explanation, resolution."

—Daniel Eisenberg

Dal polo all'equatore (From the Pole to the Equator) (1987), by Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 97 minutes.

"*From the Pole to the Equator* is based entirely on footage shot by Luca Comerio (1897-1940), official Italian court cinematographer in the early 1900s and a pioneer of Italian documentary who died, as the filmmakers note with perhaps not a little poetic irony, 'in a state of amnesia.'

"Conquest and subjugation of nature are recurrent themes in the footage, which includes scenes of hunting exotic game such a polar bear, rhinoceros and elephant in sites from the South Pole to Caucasia, Russia, India and Africa.

The prey does not stop at the lower mammalian forms: we also see African schoolchildren practicing genuflection as they are regimentally 'civilized' by colonialist nuns, numerous other 'natives' performing for and responding to the camera, and in the closing sequence, soldiers of World War I becoming human prey in combat operations in the Dolomites. The colonial gaze of photography is openly acknowledged and looms as a strong second player to the more tangible brutalities played out on screen.

"...The filmmakers' decision to eschew explicative text, narration and, for the most part, narrativity altogether is their most effective and radical. Beyond the subtly effective interventions, the filmmakers have entrusted the archive to expose its own secrets and agenda, propelling film into a meta-level of inquiry on history and representation. The cast of characters in this film might read: Imperialism, The Camera, Colonialist Gaze, Male Conquest and so on.

"In much of their work, the filmmakers delicately straddle a fine line between romanticization and critique of the archival material. Their earlier pieces included screening/performances during which evocative incenses were lit at calculated moments. In *From the Pole to the Equator*, indulgence of the senses — visual lushness and textural beauty — is a strong part of the viewer's experience. But there is also the inevitability of the images' historical content: looming, ominous, recurrent. And this is no guided tour — no narration, no intertitles, not even any hard 'information.' In a subtextual morality play, one is left to distinguish between sensory indulgence and political conscience. Perhaps it is the filmmakers' very point that these experiences are not mutually exclusive."

—Joel Katz, "From Archive to Archiveology," *Cinematograph*, vol. 4 (1991)

—Notes by Kurt Easterwood

MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS
Program V: Definitions/Experiments

Tuesday, March 5, 1991

Breaking out of the boundaries of photographic realism, the films in this program in part function to question any inherent fidelity between image and truth.

Tonight's program includes:

Broadway by Light (1958), by William Klein; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 8 minutes.

Title (1973), by John Baldessari; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 19 minutes.

Gloria!(1979), by Hollis Frampton; 16mm, color, sound 9 minutes.

At One View (1989), by Paul and Menno de Nooijer; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes.

So Is This (1982), by Michael Snow; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 47 minutes.

37°49'N/122°22'W: *New Bay Area Work*
STORYTELLING REVISITED
Program I

Thursday, March 6, 1991

From the beginning, storytelling has always drawn from diverse sources: dreams, hallucination, personal experience, myth, etc., and many mediums have been used to tell tales: from cave paintings to shadow puppets. Tonight's collection of new local works continues this tradition of using various sources to create highly individual contemporary narratives which haunt, ridicule, disturb, and deconstruct.

A keen eye and ear for resourcefulness is exemplified by all of the works. Images appropriated from dumpsters, dogma from religious radio, dialog from taped phone conversations, storylines from comic strips, dreams, and hunting trips all find their way into the telling of these tales.

—Ted White

* * *

Latency (1990), by Robert Fox; 16mm, color, sound, 6 minutes.

This is the story of the moment. The essence, the unknowable, the potential. Order does not interfere with freedom. Different realities align and collide. Everything exists together and apart. It is their story, it is your story. This is the moment. (R.F.)

Episiotomy (1990), by Scott Stark; Super-8mm, color, sound, 13 minutes.

With this film I was interested in telling a story, but devising a narrative structure to the film that was unrelated to the story. Thus the rhythms and crescendos of the narrative run obscured somewhere beneath the surface of the film's mechanics. By using in-camera editing, contradictory juxtapositions of image and sound, and a variety of backdrops, physical forces and arbitrary events, the two narrative threads interweave and occasionally intersect, creating moments of dramatic punctuation which are mostly accidental. Oddly enough, the story itself, though it is subtly diminished, disrupted and often ignored by the film's narrative structure, still seems to evoke a logical continuity; and despite all the distractions and activity around the edges of the frame, one's attention is still drawn toward the "events" represented on those flimsy pieces of paper.

Episiotomy, a medical procedure which surgically enlarges the vulva, is an allegorical reference to the interconnectedness of abuse, desire, and the exigency of sexual perfection. (S.S.)

Short of Breath (1990), by Jay Rosenblatt; 16mm, color/b&w, sound, 10 minutes.

Psychotherapy is a form of personal narrative. A patient pays to tell their particular story to an audience of one. In *Short of Breath*, a woman's painful interior narrative is conveyed through a series of evocative images which in turn are passed on to her young son. (J.R.)

Mother (1983), by Todd Herman; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes.

...some words and a few pictures about individuation and metaphysics. (T.H.)

Rose and Rose Elaine (1990), by David Sherman; 16mm, b&w, Silent, 11 minutes.

An urgent letter that will never be read. This film, the grains of memory, an unconscious faith and terror, tries to bridge the pain of a broken family communion. (D.S.)

Unaccidental Film (1989), by Robert Anbian; 16mm, color/b&w, sound, 7 minutes.

A spontaneous dream recollection in a rigidly controlled dimension of displaced actions and significations. "God Bless Africa." (R.A.)

Automobile Clean-up Expediency (1988), by Azian Nurudin; 1/2" videotape, color, sound, 6.5 minutes.

The desire to explode run-down automobiles is circumvented by red-tape, that is, by bureaucracy. I taped telephone conversations with various government agents from whom I needed to get clearances in order to do my proposed pyrotechnics. (A.N.)

In Her Image (1991), by Dana Mozer; 16mm, b&w, sound, 2 minutes.

A reinterpretation of the biblical version of creation, this time told not through the eyes of an objective bystander, but through the subjective eyes of Eve. (D.M.)

Crystal Gaze (1987), by Bernadette Smith; 16mm (presented on 1/2" videotape), color, sound, 10 minutes.

—Program curated by Ted White, Greta Snider, Lynne Sachs & Laura Poitras

Framing Cinema: A Re-Presentation

Sunday, March 10, 1991, 5 p.m.

Fog Line (1970), by Larry Gottheim; 16mm, color, silent, 11 minutes.

Thought (1971), by Larry Gottheim; 16mm, color, silent, 7 minutes.

Champ Provençal (1979), by Rose Lowder; 16mm, color, silent, 9 minutes.

Retour d'un Repere (dual-projection version, 1979), by Rose Lowder; 16mm, color, silent, 17.5 minutes.

Chott el-Djerid (A Portrait in Light and Heat) (1979), by Bill Viola; 3/4" videotape, 23 minutes.

CHINA. THE ARTS — THE PEOPLE, A TRAVEL LOG

By Ulrike Ottinger

Co-sponsored by The Goethe-Institut

Sunday, March 10, 1991

China. Die Künste — Der Alltag, eine Filmische Reisebeschreibung (China. The Arts — The People, a Travel Log), (1985), by Ulrike Ottinger; 16mm, color, sound, 270 minutes.

Part One:

Beijing, February 1985, at the time of the Spring Festival, the ancient Chinese New Year's celebration.

Part Two:

In Sichuan Province, March 1985.

Part Three:

In Yunnan Province, March 1985.

"In my previous films I have dealt with the themes of exoticism, minorities and their differing role behavior within their own culture. Now I am interested in expanding this theme, in getting to know a 'real exoticism' in a foreign land and in a different culture. I am attempting to conduct a visual discourse with my camera about exoticism as a question of point-of-view.

"In making the film, I was influenced by Chinese nature-painting: by the use of the scroll, which not only demands a different method of painting, but a different way of viewing — rolling out the scroll, focusing in on details, wandering to and fro, viewing piecemeal. So if I was filming a market square, for example, I'd pan very slowly and steadily across the square, rather than trying to capture the image in toto."

—Ulrike Ottinger

"The position of the camera throughout *China...*, whether still or moving, insists in a separation between the filmmaker and the sights that catch her eye, that she wants to collect and bring home. The filmmaker is only integrated into the narrative as separate: we never see her image, but her presence as a foreigner is acknowledged by people's attitude toward the camera (seemingly curious, interested) and by the explanations that are given, at several points, of things we see. The film pays as much attention to things with an undisclosed meaning as it does to a universalizing aspect — human gestures and facial expressions that are understood 'directly,' as if no translation is necessary. In other words, the film underscores our cultural difference as observers, yet links us to something we share with these people. The China that Ottinger shows us is an example in which social signs are not oppressive, especially because we see artistic expression in all facets of daily life. This is the principle of selection used in the film, whence its title: *China: The Arts. The Everyday Life*. This is the privilege of the visitor: to be able to see another culture selectively, in this instance, as a 'real' example of unoppressed Difference."

—Janet Bergstrom, "The Theater of Everyday Life," *Camera Obscura* No. 18, Sept. 1988

LIVING WITH LIMITS: THE ART OF THE CAMERA-ROLL
Program I

Thursday, March 14, 1991

Tonight's films embrace the artificial barrier of the manufactured camera roll, exploring intersections between the physical world and human perception.

Morning (1968), by Ernie Gehr; 16mm, color, silent, 4.5 minutes at 16 f.p.s.

"A still has to do with a particular intensity of light, an image, a composition frozen in time and space.

"A shot has to do with a variable intensity of light, an internal balance of time dependent upon an intermittent movement and a movement within a given space dependent upon persistence of vision.

"A shot can be a film, or a film may be composed of a number of shots..."

"*Morning and Wait* were the first works in which I tried to break down the essential contradictions of still and shot by enormously emphasizing the still-frame— each frame—as a particular intensity of light, a frozen composition in time and space and its difference and its relation to the shot/film. Out of this came a new balance in the shot and in the frame (now seen, rather than seen through). The film became an arrangement of stills.

—Ernie Gehr

Soft Rain (1968), by Ken Jacobs; 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes at 16 f.p.s.

"Three identical prints of a single 100 ft. fixed-camera take are shown from beginning to end-roll light-flare, with a few feet of blackness preceding/following the rolls. View from above is of a partially snow-covered low flat rooftop receding between the brick walls of two much taller downtown N.Y. loft buildings. A slightly tilted rectangular shape left of the center of the composition is the section of rain-wet Reade Street visible to us over the low rooftop. Distant trucks, cars, persons carrying packages, umbrellas sluggishly pass across this little stage-like area. A fine rain-mist is confused, visually, with the color emulsion grain.

"A large black rectangle following up and filling [the] space above the stage-area is seen as both an unlikely abyss extending in deep space behind the stage or more properly, as a two dimensional plane suspended far forward of the entire snow/rain scene. Though it clearly if slightly overlaps the two receding loft building walls the mind, while knowing better, insists on presuming it to be overlapped by them. (At one point the black plane even trembles.) So this mental tugging takes place throughout. The contradiction of 2D reality versus 3D implication is amusingly and mysteriously explicit.

Filed at 24 f.p.s. but projected at 16 the street activity is perceptively slowed down. It's become a somewhat heavy laboring. The loop repetition (the series will intrigue you to further run-throughs) automatically imparts a steadily growing rhythmic sense of the street-activities. Anticipation for familiar movement-complexes builds, and as all smaller complexities join up in our knowledge of the whole the purely accidental counter-passings of people and vehicles becomes satisfyingly cogent, seems rhythmically structured and of a piece. Becomes choreography.

—Ken Jacobs

The Vestal Theater (1970), by Helene Kaplan; 16mm, color, sound, 10.25 minutes.

"... is a documentary shot in the lobby of a movie theater from behind the candy counter. The camera was turned off only when it ran out of film. It was shot sync-sound fixed camera. The moviegoers could see the camera clearly (no Allen-Funt-cute). Like Monet's cathedral, this same image would never have been the same again. The image is complex, multi-layered planes of focus. And I love the way people ask for popcorn and tap their dollar bills. Film time and real time was the same.

—Helene Kaplan

Barn Rushes (1971), by Larry Gottheim; 16mm, color, silent at 16 f.p.s.

"The barn, gently bobbing on the screen, reveals its changing silhouette, itself a screen. Each subsection, separated from the others by light-struck film ends into which the illusion descends (and from which it emerges), records a different day/time/light situation. A radiant serenity resolves the oppositions between background-movement/foreground movement, transparent/opaque, sky/earth, figure/ground, flat/solid. One savors the ballet of movement, memory and anticipation. One wants to know truly the simple beauty of the barn, to comprehend. We see it again and again, but it always eludes our grasp. The eye is pleased, the mind keeps on transcending.

—Larry Gottheim

"The barn, recurring as a steady note, is suddenly displaced from figure to ground, from center to edge, by the impinging of the most ephemeral and incidental events, such as the butterfly, microscopic within the scale of the barn. These tiny occurrences, mere instants in the scale of the film's length, assume a significance out of proportion to their literal duration. In a certain sense the subject of *Barn Rushes* is these moments: adventurous incidents, unsought and unplanned, and yet somehow relied upon to happen, or perhaps more accurately, made possible by simple and prolonged recurrence.

—Morgan Fisher

Short Film Series: Vermeer Frames/Chimney/ Portrait with Parents/Metronome (1976-), by Guy Sherwin; 16mm, &w, silent, 13.5 minutes at 24 f.p.s.

"Started in 1976 and theoretically ongoing—total is now about thirty—the bulk of the films was made between 1976 and 1979."

—Guy Sherwin

"It is literally impossible to offer a definitive description since the film has no beginning, middle or end. It is instead composed of a varying series of three-minute sections...Although the individual sections themselves are simple, the issues they raise are varied and complex: some of the ideas woven through the series include film as a record of life, an autobiographical document; the image surface as a controlled pattern of light and rhythm; the camera apparatus as a 'clock' which actually 'marks time'...

"As themes resurface and interconnect throughout the series, this web of ideas becomes denser. The careful crafting of each section ensures a variety of surfaces, textures, shapes, light and rhythms, making each reviewing a constant revelation."

—Deke Dusinberre

—Notes by E.S. Theise

STORYTELLING REVISITED

Program II

New Work by Baillie, Grenier, Kobland, and Zando

Saturday, March 16, 1991

The P-38 Pilot (1990), by Bruce Baillie; 3/4" videotape, 15 minutes

"For the dispossessed, the excluded, the condemned....exiled by their own *preferences*."

"A work from the darkness of winter, a kind of pre-*Paradiso* which parallels by chance, Dante's *Purgatorio*—my own confessions and clues to ascent, life, and Light.

"As all art is made from some particular sort of sticks and stones, this piece happens to be formed from the words of a war hero who suffers his own peculiar "habitate," as this P-38 pilot would have it. The film is not, however, a documentary about—in this case—alcoholism.

"Note from the conclusion: 'Te lucis ante terminum' (Thy Light before the end—or, before the darkness), taken from the traditional Compline service at the end of the day, sung by Christian religious thru the centuries. The

image of beloved (my family) at the very end of the work is the final, perhaps essential clue, given also of course by Dante Alighieri in his 14th century classic, by way of Beatrice: i.e., the way beyond inevitable suffering, transcending individual intellect, is only through (pure) love and loving." (B.B.)

Foto-Roman (1990), by Ken Kobland; 3/4" videotape, 28 minutes.

"I think of it as a prologue to a perhaps sleazy 'thriller'. A sort of shaggy-dog plot of voyeuristic atmospheres. It seems to me to be about voyeurism and the voyeuristic license of the camera. About exposing, uncovering, unwrapping, about glimpsing; photographically, physically, psychologically, X-rays, parting curtains, a repeated uncovering of things; things obscured and revealed. Not a static moment, a fixed look, but one that's locked in time. One that constantly escapes us and that we constantly try to re-grasp." (K.K.)

You (1990), by Vincent Grenier; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes.

Revolving around the use of the second person address, Grenier glimpses and connotes the fragmentation of a relationship. His film seems caught up in the desire to intimate. Grenier posits pictorial superimpositions as a metaphor for the disjunctions of language, image, and time against a spoken text/memory. The tensions and ambiguities of interior and exterior spaces and states of being are underlined by the equally elusive qualities of the filmic image. This intricate interplay summons questions of representation in regards to the mutability intrinsic to remembrance and the way words simultaneously hold in place and belie authenticity and abstraction.

The Bus Stops Here: 3 Case Histories (1990), by Julie Zando; 3/4" videotape, 27 minutes.

"Zando is interested in the play of power around the image—between director, actor, and spectator. Her tapes are highly subjective—they focus on her own experience of dominance and submission, her need to control and be controlled by other women—but she examines her feelings with an unsparing, cool intelligence. She is voyeur to her own exhibitionism and the two poles keep her work balanced. You never have the sense that she's spilling her guts."

—Amy Taubin

The inquiry of this film centers around the elaborate network of family, therapy, and love relationships. Each offers help, voices, instructions, authority, advice in a particular recognizable code to the two sisters. The audience comes to sympathize with the struggle of the sisters. Though represented as the primary characters, their overdetermined situations and scrutinized actions make it extraordinarily difficult comprehend and hence overcome the incestuous system invoked.

—Notes by Crosby McCloy

**MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS
PROGRAM VI: PORTRAITS**

Tuesday, March 19, 1992

This program features works by three photographers known for their distinctive approaches to portraiture, reflecting and expanding concerns the artists have explored in their still photography.

Tonight's program includes:

Still Moving: Patti Smith (1978), by Robert Mapplethorpe; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes.

Isaac Singer's Nightmare and Mrs. Pupko's Beard (1974), by Bruce Davidson; 16mm, color, sound, 30 minutes.

Broken Noses (1987), by Bruce Weber; 16mm, b&w, color, sound, 75 minutes.

**RESURRECTING A TROUBLED PAST:
FAMILY PORTRAITS BY ABRAHAM RAVETT**
Filmmaker in person

Thursday, March 21, 1991

In the works that Cinematheque is presenting tonight, Abraham Ravett uses a range of techniques to explore his relationships with two of his family members who endured the Nazi death camps.

Everything's For You (1989); 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 58 minutes.

The film uses a combination of family photographs, archival photographs from The Ghetto Fighters House in Israel, computer graphics and previously shot 16mm material to reflect on Ravett's relationship with his deceased father, a man who had survived the Lodz Ghetto and Aushwitz.

"I would like the pulse of the construction, the rhythms of the visuals to speak as clearly as the sparse aural track. I would like to leave an impression which conveys the tensions of a father/son relationship, the sense of loss at a parent's death, and the realization that the cycle is somehow potentially played out, once again in one's own backyard...I see this work in the broader context of reconstructing family histories in order to better understand and live with filial relationships..." (A.R.)

Half Sister (1985); 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 22 minutes.

Half Sister was inspired by the discovery of a photograph of Ravett's half-sister, Toncia, who died at Aushwitz. The film uses new material, including interviews with his mother and computer images, and vintage footage to reimagine Toncia. The film is also an effort to "...articulate how memory and imagination work in us..."

"After seeing that picture of her, I began to imagine what her life might have been like, what she would have looked like had she lived. I had no connection to my half-sister. In a sense, the making of this film was an attempt to make a connection with her. It was a way to negotiate that distance between us..." (A.R.)

AN AUDIENCE IS REQUIRED

Seitaro Kuroda, performance painting; Larry Ochs, free saxophone
Daniel Barnett, film; Seiji Horibuchi, producer

Saturday, March 23, 1991

Co-sponsored by:

Gallery Piazza, Sausalito

The San Francisco Cinematheque

Viz Communications, San Francisco

Tonight's event will be preceded by a videotape of Kuroda's performance painting.

Whatever happens in this wildly experimental collaboration tonight will be the result of a chain of events, perhaps accidents, in which the audience is the last of many unknowns, a vortex of perhaps accidental energy. The instigator of the vortex, Seiji Horibuchi, set off the chain when, following a hunch, he introduced me to the work

of Seitaro Kuroda last Fall. Kuroda-san and I began to speak after his first American painting performance at Gallery Piazza in Sausalito. In our first, really our only conversation, he described, through Seiji's interpretation, performances in which he painted many small paintings at once, accompanied by various kinds of live music.

Whenever I visualize sequences of still images, my mind leaps to put them in motion with imaginary transitions; it's an unstoppable disposition. Kuroda-san has been painting live in front of audiences accompanied by musicians of many different persuasions. His natural disposition in turn was to imagine himself painting in sequence over the projection of a film. I mentioned that I had just finished a silent film that was abstract enough to be able to mesh with an abstract painting performance such as the one I'd just seen. He immediately, without having seen the film, made a firm agreement to collaborate on such a project.

I was very excited by the attitude toward aesthetic danger embodied in improvisational painting live before an audience, painting which pulled energy and inspiration from the live music, and the feedback of energy from an audience. The audience added the additional necessary element, taking the act of creating a painting out of the closet and making the process actually available rather than just available through analysis. This is the same energy liberated by improvisation in music.

My work, especially my working process, has always remained deep in a closet. *Endless* was made in relative isolation. I was as troubled and challenged as I was interested to this spontaneous overpainting of my meticulously whole and hermetically complete work.

When I proposed the idea to Steve Anker to see if the Cinematheque would be interested in putting the event on the calendar, he was immediately intrigued, but it was his hunch that a third element would make the program really work. Almost as soon as he said this I heard a very wild saxophone in my head. I mentioned that to a friend who said: "Larry Ochs." Steve put me in touch with Larry who agreed that the project fell within his job description as soon as he saw the film. As soon as I heard Larry play, I knew it was him I had heard in my head.

With almost no effort on my part, the project fell into place finally with the generous support of the Gallery Piazza, Kuroda-san's American representative, and Seiji Horibuchi's adroit steering.

The pieces are still in the air until you bring them into place by your attention.

Seitaro Kuroda's design firm K2 is a household word in Japan. He has been doing performance painting since 1985 and has created more than 150 works during more than 70 events.

Larry Ochs, currently playing with *The Rova Saxophone Quartet* and *Room*, has toured internationally and recorded extensively. He writes music for both groups and tonight's music will be a mix of improvisation and composition.

I have made more than two dozen 16mm films since 1965.

—Notes by Daniel Barnett

Another View: Selected Works Re-Screened

Sunday, March 24, 1991, 5 p.m.

Aus der ferne (1989), by Matthias Müller; 16mm blow-up of Super 8mm, color, sound, 28 minutes.
The Sleepers (1989), by Mark La Pore; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Remains (1990), by Konrad Steiner; 16mm, b&w/color, silent, 13 minutes.

Marecage (1990), by Rupert Jenkins; Super 8mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes.

INK, PIXEL, CUT-OUTS, SPRAY: More Animation
Curated and presented by Eric S. Theise

Sunday, March 24, 1991

We were overjoyed with the success of December's *Ink, Pixel, Xerox, Clay* program of alternative animation. Good press; great audience. So when Larry Jordan announced the completion of his new film it was only natural that we put together another program under a similar banner. Cut-Out was an easy choice, coming from the technique favored by Jordan and Doug Haynes. Spray was a (forced) rhyme with the previous program's Clay, but fortunately Robert Breer's *T.Z.* gives it credibility with a can of spray paint and a urination!

Fred Camper wrote in the *Chicago Reader*: Larry Jordan has been making independent films for more than 30 years. Quietly, without fanfare or much public notice, often working with small crews or completely alone, he has made dozens of spectacularly beautiful films. His great theme is the celebration of the power of the human imagination; his films are full of enchanted spaces, film worlds set apart from the banality of daily living—privileged arenas in which the imagination can run free.

Tonight's program is centered around enchanted—and disenchanting—spaces. In most cases, the subject material is at one or the other end of this continuum. Larry Cuba and James Whitney used computer equipment that was, at the moment of making, state of the art, to explore eternal questions of spirituality and grace, pattern and texture. Robert Breer, working at a disenchanting time of his life, found inspiration in the most mundane of landscapes and household items. Doug Haynes used images clipped from the popular press to illustrate the closing of the doors of perception that comes with education and socialization. And Zagreb Studios used Erik Satie's piano pieces, serene and rambunctious, as a backdrop to some of the most disenchanting and disturbing animation you may ever see.

For other animators, it is the artistic materials themselves that are enchanted. The Starevitchs' use of dead insects is astonishing even today, and their film, though a cliché tale of marital infidelity, musters as much magic as the meditations on the program. The risks and rewards of Rose Bond's method—drawing and painting directly on 35mm clear film—parallel those found in the Celtic legend she retells. And Larry Jordan's exquisite engravings, choices of color, and skills with collage, motion, and unexpected juxtaposition make visible the magic in both his subjects and his materials.

3/78 (1978), by Larry Cuba; 16mm, b/w, sound, 6 minutes

"It seems the major assumed goal [of computer animation] is to push the state of the art technologically. I'm not interested in that. My work is not part of that big race for the flashiest, zoomiest, most chrome, most glass, most super-rendered image. My interest is experimental animation as the design of form in motion, independent of any particular technology used to create it ... If you think about the process used in abstract animation it does become important that you're using a computer, in the way it affects your vocabulary. Because if you start with these mathematical structures you can discover imagery that you have not previsualized but have "found" within the dimensions of the search space. Certainly every artist is engaged in some form of dialogue with their tools and their medium, whether it's brush, paint and paper or a video synthesizer or a computer. But my tool is the

mathematics and the programming that depend on a computer as the medium to execute it. So in that sense the computer adds a new dimension to this field of exploration which started with Gina and Carra, the Italian Futurists who are attributed with the earliest abstract films in 1912. They were talking 20th century dynamism. Today we're talking mathematics.

—Larry Cuba in an interview with Gene Youngblood

T.Z. (1979), by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 8.5 minutes

"Do you know the joke about the two explorers who get captured by the natives and tied to trees? The chief tells the first one, 'You have two choices: death or ru-ru.' The explorer thinks a bit and says, 'Well, ru-ru.' 'Wise decision,' says the chief, who unties him. Then the whole tribe beats him up and abuses him sexually and completely destroys him and throws him down dead in front of the other explorer. The chief asks the second explorer which he prefers, death or ru-ru? The second explorer is very shaken up by what he's seen and finally says, 'Death.' And the chief says, 'Very wise decision—death it is—but first, a little ru-ru.' I love that joke. In my work there's always a little ru-ru."

—Robert Breer in an interview with Scott MacDonald

The Revenge of the Kinematograph Operator (1912) by Ladislav and Irene Starevitch; 16mm, b&w, silent, 13 minutes

"Wladyslaw Starewicz, whose date of birth is given variously as 1882 and 1890, was born in Poland and attended the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg ... he was named director of the museum of natural history in Kovno (Kaunas), Lithuania, where he made four short documentary films on the colorful local customs and a reconstructed battle between two animated stag beetles in *Lucanus Cervus* around 1910. Upon returning to Moscow, Starewicz made a parody of the popular Danish picture *The Four Devils* using animated frogs as actors. Of the eight animated films he completed in Russia, the best is *The Cameraman's Revenge* ... In one respect Starevitch's early films are more interesting than his later ones because of the essential bestiality of the puppets, which were after all the corpses of bugs, birds, and animals. This total lack of "cuteness" was especially true of the unclothed insects in *The Cameraman's Revenge*, a film that surrealists would have loved."

—Donald Crafton

Satiemania (1978), by Zdenko Gasparovic; 16mm, color, sound, 14.5 minutes

"Superbly drawn animation from Zagreb Studios, Yugoslavia, set to music familiar and unfamiliar by Erik Satie. Damned humanity in scenes of modern urban life: eating, drinking, dressing and undressing, making love, fighting in the streets in outbursts of predatory violence. Erotic, disturbing, ultimately life (and death) affirming."

—John Luther Schofill

Common Loss (1979), by Doug Haynes; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes

"Intelligence is the ability to interact, and this ability can grow only by interacting with new phenomena, that is, by moving from that which is known into that which is not known. Although this seems obvious, this movement from the known to the unknown proves to be both the key and the stumbling block to development. Most intellectual crippling comes from the failure to observe the balance of this movement. In our anxieties, we fail to allow the child a continual interaction with the phenomena of this earth on a full-dimensional level (which means with all five of his body senses); and at the same time, we rush the child into contact with phenomena not appropriate to his stage of biological development. That is, either we block the child's movement into the unknown and so block intellectual growth, or we propel the child into inappropriate experience."

—Joseph Chilton Pierce, *Magical Child*

Cerridwen's Gift (1986), by Rose Bond; 16mm, color, sound, 9.5 minutes

"The gist of the romance is as follows. A nobleman of Penllyn named Tegid Voel had a wife named Caridwen, or Cerridwen, and two children, Creirwy, the most beautiful girl in the world, and Afagddu, the ugliest boy. They lived on an island in the middle of Lake Tegid. To compensate for Afagddu's ugliness, Cerridwen decided to make him highly intelligent. So, according to a recipe contained in the books of Vergil of Toledo the magician (hero of a twelfth-century romance), she boiled up a cauldron of inspiration and knowledge, which had to be kept on the simmer for a year and a day. Season by season, she added to the brew magical herbs gathered in their correct planetary hours. While she gathered the herbs she put little Gwion, the son of Gwreang, of the parish of Llanfair in Caereinion, to stir the cauldron. Towards the end of the year three burning drops flew out and fell on little Gwion's finger. He thrust it into his mouth and at once understood the nature and meaning of all things past, present and future, and thus saw the need of guarding against the wiles of Cerridwen who was determined on killing him as soon as he had completed his work. He fled away, and she pursued him like a black screaming hag ... found him and swallowed him. When she returned to her own shape she found herself pregnant of Gwion and nine months later bore him as a child..."

—Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*

The Visible Compendium (1990), by Larry Jordan; 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes

"*The Visible Compendium* reaches farther than any of my other animations. It goes off in many directions, held together, hopefully, by the sound track, which itself goes off in a number of directions: strange sounds, some recognizable, others not. Some music. No voice, no silence. This is intentional. The film is a compendium, as indicated in the title—a catalog of visible possible experiences, some at normal time, some speeded up or slowed down, some continuous, others broken up. Why? Tough question. Why not? Why not experiment with different modes of visible motion? (And, I might add, totally manufactured bits of motion elucidated by the light from the projector.) For instance, when the nude woman with the towel walks across the screen, the image is broken up with flashes, close-ups, erratic zooms, etc. This is partly to find out what such a construct looks like, partly to express the sound track (which was in place before the animation), and partly to express those unspoken 'meanings' I mentioned above.

"I wanted to construct enigmas for you, the viewer, to puzzle on and delight in. In this sense I have a part-time interest in entertainment, because when entertained, in other than a simple-minded sense, the mind comes to life, exults in its own power of perception, makes something out of nothing. The realm of the Imagination opens!"

—Larry Jordan

Lapis (1963-66), by James A. Whitney; 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes

The "lapis" or "philosophers stone" was the alchemical aid to meditation; it was felt to contain a vital force, a center of knowledge. Carl Jung wrote that the way to the power of the lapis is by a spiral, "A mandala that revolves eternally like the heavens."

"*Lapis* gave form to an idea and experience which had completely occupied my attention during the period 1963-1966—a mind form as endless change, eternal play (Sanskrit Lila) while the center, the axial point (Bindu) was at total rest—a circulation of the light absorbing into and radiating from a center of complete emptiness, pointing to a non-entropic energy beyond space and time—here in the total cycle of the film was envisioned the 'mystical marriage' (Hieros Gamos) of the alchemist, an immanent seeing transcending all pairs of opposites."

—James Whitney

Read more:

Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928*, MIT Press, 1982.

Kit Layborne, *The Animation Book*, Crown Publishers, New York, 1979.

Robert Russett and Cecile Starr, *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1988.

Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1970.

—Notes by E.S. Theise

P.S. Our next animation program, **Felix - The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat**, features animator/author John Canemaker in a tribute to Felix the Cat and his creator, Otto Messmer. Canemaker will share anecdotes and show ten rare films from the years 1923-1928. May 16th, 8:00p.m., here at the Art Institute.

**MOVING PICTURES: FILMS BY PHOTOGRAPHERS
PROGRAM VII: THREE MEDITATIONS**

Tuesday, March 26, 1991

This final program brings together the work of three renowned photographers who have devoted a considerable part of their careers to filmmaking.

Tonight's program includes:

Born to Film (1981), by Danny Lyon; 16mm, b&w, sound, 33 minutes.

Hunter (1989), by Robert Frank; 16mm, color, sound, 35 minutes. In German, English and Turkish, with English subtitles.

Les Annees Declic (1983), by Raymond Depardon; 16mm, color, sound, 65 minutes. In French with English subtitles.

OCEAN BEAT: SOUND VISION

By Andrej Zdravic

Artist in Person

Thursday, March 28, 1991

Ocean Beat is a film carrying a certain message of particular importance, a message we shall need in the future for our survival. The film has many parts. There are some very quiet parts which have an almost therapeutic effect, there are some cruel parts, there are some very interesting parts showing the relationship of the Ocean to the animal world, to the people. For instance, the first part of the film which I call the cruel sea, showing its devastating

force in ruining the shelters the people made for themselves. I will never forget and I will always like to remember the scene with sandpipers when I was on this particular beach so many years ago. And why? Do you know how much you have to run for your survival!

—Franjo Zdravic

My films are born from direct experience. When I film I try to leave behind all the baggage from the past, and immerse myself in the *here and now*. The act of *playing* the camera is the moment of truth—just as in music.

In his film about the Ocean and its waters, its waves and its foam, Zdravic is the water, the waves and the foam.
—Bojan Stih, *The Miraculous Games of Nature*

My films are vehicles for an *active* participation in the world. They do not tell stories, and yet they *do* for they reveal a *mode of being*.

The fluidity of the water is not the result of any effort on the part of the water, but its natural property.
— Chuang Tzu (4th c.)

Light and sound are pulsations—they resonate in our cells. There is intelligence in the cells and wisdom in nature. This is why I am seeking truth in the dance of the waves. An ancient idea perhaps but we must make a revision of it, because we must make a profound revision of ourselves.

Not only does water give to the human being and to all living nature the basis for existence in a living body, but it pictures- as though in a great parable- higher qualities of man's development. Qualities such as the overcoming of rigidity in thought, of prejudice, of intolerance.

—Theodor Schwenk, *The Sensitive Chaos*

Ocean Beat (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 60 minutes.

Ocean Beat is a garland of movements, a study of rhythm, of tension and release, of persistence, of the intimate immensity of time. The Ocean *is* a vast subject indeed, and I will return to it in different contexts in the future. After ten years of exploring it, I feel I have only just begun!

Ocean Beat was filmed on many spots along the Californian coast—from Del Norte to Big Sur, on a voyage to Glacier Bay—Alaska, and on the island of Hawaii, the present home of the fire goddess Pele. (This last chapter, or the battle of Pele and Na-maka-o-ka-hai, the Ocean goddess, will be developed in a longer forthcoming film).

Kres (Bonfire), 1987); 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes.

Kres in an intimate film celebrating my families reunion and the magic of dancing flames. Filmed on the banks of the river Soca in North Slovenia. A place which inspired me to begin filmmaking 18 years ago.

—Notes by Andrej Zdravic

Andrej Zdravic was born in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, lived in Algiers, and worked as a D.J. with Radio Student in LJ.. He began filmmaking in 1973, inspired by music and the powers of nature. In 1974 he came to the States to study film at SUNY-Buffalo (BA & MA), lived in New York City and moved to San Francisco in 1980. He made over twenty five films, and had over seventy in-person appearances and seminars in the U.S. and abroad. He taught film at the Universities at Buffalo-NY, Milwaukee-WI, and at San Francisco State. Since 1988 he has been associated with the Exploratorium as a video producer/artist, and is also freelancing as a composer of film music.

**MONSTROUS CONCEPTIONS:
It's Alive! and God Told Me To
By Larry Cohen**

Sunday, March 31, 1991

Larry Cohen is one of the most politically aware, sardonic and resourceful of the recently emerged new generation of low-budget filmmakers. His films offer devastating critiques of the more salubrious aspects of American society while wearing the disguise of off-beat films made in the horror and crime genres for drive-in movies.

God Told Me To (1977); 16mm, color, sound, 89 minutes.

"I don't relate to anyone who is a professional religionist...who has the ego to tell us that they know God's will, and can tell us what God thinks and what God likes and what God *Is* and how God feels about integration, South Africa, and AIDS. Everybody's got a different idea what God thinks; the crazy guy in St. Patrick's Cathedral—none of them know anything."

—Larry Cohen, interview with Andrea Juno, *Incredibly Strange Films* (1986)

"The iconoclastic universe of *God Told Me To* condemns dogma and organized religion, posing the question: If God and religion are ideas conceived by man, what would happen if these concepts took form and turned against their creators? All hell breaks loose when the malevolent manifestation of the Christian 'God' combines with the notion of UFOs and 'gods from outer space.' The film takes the position: you made it up, now you have to live with it.

"In myths, heroes appear when society is in decline. The killings in the film create a crisis which tests the validity of authoritarian figures and institutions. Religion, law enforcement and the social microcosm of the family are all revealed as corrupt. God—the ultimate authority figure—is stained with blood. The police, rendered ineffectual by their conceptual conservatism, futilely attempt to impose order by suppressing information. A father exercises his 'divine right' over his family, and in a testimonial to blind faith describes how he shot his wife and children. When asked why he did it, Dad concludes (smiling beatifically), 'Because He gives me so much and asks for so little.'

"Whose side is God on, anyway? Consistent with history, God's elect in *God Told Me To* are a small group of wealthy and powerful men, seemingly representing the 'New Right' and fundamentalist government politicians. In an impressive board room, they await exalted positions in the new millennium. One of the powerful expresses concern over the fate of the dying masses. Another sums up the inequity of a religion based on guilt when he replies, 'The only way He has ever communicated is through fear.' It appears ill-advised to trust those who believe they have a direct line to God.

"...The message of the film is greater than the fate of its hero. Larry Cohen utilizes the mythic possibilities of film to its fullest. The hero's journey into the realm of darkness corresponds to an individual's process of psychic growth. *God Told Me To* explores and explodes the major delusions underlying our culture's religious beliefs; it is an exorcism of hypocrisy."

—Margaret Crane, "God Told Me To," *Incredibly Strange Films* (1986)

It's Alive! (1973); 16mm, color, sound, 91 minutes.

"*It's Alive!* tries to tell about parents' feelings for a child that's different. In today's world it could be anything wrong with the kid—psychologically or physiologically—and yet parents have to come to terms with their feelings for the child. At the time I made the picture, people were afraid of their children because their kids were

wearing their hair long, smoking grass, and fucking. All of a sudden they were taking acid, fathers were shooting their teenage sons in the house because they couldn't control them anymore, and there was a general fear of the younger generation by the older generation—they were suddenly *afraid*. This was a big, prevalent feeling at the time, and I felt that the story fitted in. This was a picture of that time: the early seventies.

"It's funny how things even out as time goes by. These movies become a part of the culture or the subculture and they're there, but everything else changes. The hairstyles change, the compulsions change, the political things change. The people stop marching in the streets, and they get jobs, and get on the pension plan, and they get conservative...people got through the big drug thing...then they get off the drug thing, and then join the gym and the healthclub and they jog and eat wheat germ and take colonic enemas—these are the same people that were wasting their bodies years before.

"The world changes but the movie stays the same; it's just there. It's made in one culture and emerges ten years later in another. And sometimes it's understood better by people who are no longer in the culture that the picture was about. Ten years later they've changed into different people; they see the picture on cable and say, 'Hey, this is very good! Why didn't we like this when we first saw it?'"

—Larry Cohen, interview with Andrea Juno, *Incredibly Strange Films* (1986)

RECENT FILMS BY LARRY GOTTHEIM
Artist in person

Thursday, April 18, 1991

Machete Gillette... Mama (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 45 minutes.

Filmed in the Dominican Republic. Narrative voice, Bernardo Roman. Edited with David Gresalfi, Victor Camilo. Sound mix engineer, Steven Grietzer. Titles, Jung Kim. Production assistance in the D.R., Oriol Torres, Victor Camilo. Print by DuArt.

There is a narrative, based on my own experience, which becomes clearest in the final section. The chronology is displaced, with the densest and most problematic narrative coming at the end—the first section deals with events that occur afterwards; the introduction to the film is also the resolution of the narrative problems. The poeticised narration is spoken by a Dominican voice, one of the many "voices" heard, which also include another, "authoritative," Dominican voice, and various fragments of speech and music intentionally left untranslated.

The visual and sonic style is often rapid, disjunctive, with intervals of blackness, of silence. There is a ceremony in each section (with the silence of the final ceremony partially explained by the narrative situation). These ceremonies, and the other aspects of life in the Dominican Republic, are not presented as ethnographic documentary, but as elements in a complex densely poetic visual and sonic work that strives for a complex symbolic meaning allied to the nature of the ceremonies. Although I am not part of that culture—which, in any case, is not a simple unified whole but a complex mixture of diverse fragments and individuals—the film attempts to join my own life and symbolic imagination with that of some of the people who appear. The first overt appearance of this theme in my work is in *Mouches Volantes* (1976), the 2nd film of *Elective Affinities*, in which aspects of my own life are superimposed on that of the black blues singer Blind Willie Johnson, although issues having to do with boundaries and ritual were obliquely there from the start. The transposition of essence from one individual to another is more easily understood within that culture than in "ours," which thinks in dichotomies of self and "other," in terms of individuals, cultures, languages, races.

The title, a song meaning a razor-sharp machete (a Haitian song transposed onto a popular Dominican one), refers to many issues of edge and boundary which run through the film—Dominican/Haitian, male/female, life/death. They connect with various motifs—fire, the sugar industry, basic elements of daily life (cooking, washing, dreaming, dancing...) which are motifs within the film as well as in the rituals. The film sounds certain political and social themes, but they are not given doctrinaire treatment, nor are the various theoretical issues surrounding “representation” on which the work rests. They are embedded in a more complex project—that of creating a cinematic artwork—more dangerous, more easily misunderstood.

Your Television Traveler (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 17 minutes.

In 1989, in Havana (for a film festival) I considered making a film. All that resulted was some footage, primarily of the San Lazaro (patron Saint of Cuba) pilgrimage, and a conversation with a very sad woman about her sadness. Around this core the other elements gathered. In part this is a film about that absent unmade other film.

The film is constructed in layers of superimposed material, creating a synchronic network of relationships concerning representation, and a self-reflection on myself as representer, between the major projects of *Machete Gillette... Mama* and my current project in Haiti. It links back to all my previous work. I was surprised to discover Cuba darkly embedded in our space program. A film about hidden mysteries—historical, political, personal.

—Notes by Larry Gottheim

**MARKET STREET IN MOTION:
A Free Outdoor Screening**

*Co-Sponsored by The Exploratorium Film Program
and the SF Arts Commission*

Thursday, April 19, 1991

This outdoor public screening celebrates the vitality of our city's major thoroughfare as it reflects upon San Francisco in the 20th century. Projected onto the side of the historic Flood Building at Hallidie Plaza at Powell and Market Streets, this screening will give the public a chance to reflect on their city in history: its destruction through earthquakes, its changing skyline, and its ability to reconstitute its presence. From turn-of-the-century archival footage to films made by contemporary San Francisco artists, the program includes:

A Trip Down Market Street - 1905 (1905), Anonymous; 16mm, b&w, silent, 10 minutes.

This footage documents San Francisco's main corridor at the turn of the century from the point of view of a moving trolley car. Pedestrians, bicyclists and horses precariously cross its path in an era before traffic lights and laws! The Palace Hotel, and other pre-earthquake buildings are preserved in this archival treasure. Although the film is simple and straightforward, it provides a glimpse into the vibrancy of those early days.

Notes on the Port of Saint Francis (1952), by Frank Stauffacher; 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes.

Frank Stauffacher, founder of the first “Art in Cinema” program at SF's Museum of Modern Art in 1947, created a mid-century portrait of San Francisco, the visuals based on the writings of Robert Louis Stevenson. It captures a city of contrasts, particularly in the mixture of people who call it home. The camera is in constant motion—up hills, across streets, along architectural silhouettes—giving a kinetic life to the film.

Panorama (1982), by Michael Rudnick; 16mm, color, sound, 13 minutes.

In the tradition of "city symphonies" Michael Rudnick creates an engaging portrait of the San Francisco skyline and the bay, as the camera sweeps the horizon from windows and rooftops. Through the use of a continuously panning camera and time-lapse effects this work captures the poetry found in moving light and shadows, reflections and fog.

Deconstruction Sight (1990), by Dominic Angerame; 16mm, b&w, sound, 13 minutes.

Dominic Angerame, Administrative Director of Canyon Cinema, filmed a non-narrative perspective of San Francisco's continual tearing down and building up along its bay. An abstract summation of what we build, what we destroy, what we find useful to do, and how we let our interaction with these processes describe what we call human.

Cable Car Melody (1986), by Charles Wright; 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes.

Charles Wright creates a meditative look down Hyde Street toward the San Francisco Bay. In the foreground a cable car moves across the surface of the screen, while everything else around it changes, creating a melody.

Eureka! (1905/1985), by Ernie Gehr; 16mm, b&w, dual-projection with sound installation, 30 minutes.

Local filmmaker Ernie Gehr rephotographed *Trip Down Market Street - 1905* and will screen this simultaneously along side *1906 Earthquake* footage (1906, 30 mins), archival sequences of the 1906 earthquake, the fire, and its aftermath.

COLONIAL VESTIGES: INDIA SONG BY MARGUERITE DURAS

Preceded by sight unseen by Jonathan Robinson

Sunday, April 21, 1991

sight unseen (1990), by Jonathan Robinson; 3/4" videotape, 30 minutes.

"*sight unseen* traces the displacement of an American tourist's sense of belonging, indicating with irony and dry humor the ambiguous persistence of the colonial imagination in touring the 'exotic.' A personal documentary essay, *sight unseen* utilizes the 19th century travelogue form and invests it with a contemporary perspective and aesthetic to look beyond the very illusions that it inhabits. India is the 'exotic' land encountered, but *sight unseen* is not descriptive so much of India as of the tourist's perceptions and his abilities to perceive." (J.R.)

India Song (1974), dir. by Marguerite Duras; with Delphine Seyrig, Michel Lonsdale, Mathieu Carriere and Claude Mann; photographed by Bruno Nuytten, edited by Solange Leprince; screenplay by Duras. Running time: 120 minutes.

"(...) One day I thought it had happened—that I'd never write again. It was during that drying-out treatment. I remember it well. It was in the American Hospital. I was standing at the window, leaning on Yann's arm. I was looking at the red roofs opposite, and at the fair-haired woman with blue eyes who was sticking up out of the chimney. Her husband, the captain in *India Song*, was looking distractedly at the sky. He was emerging from another chimney. Suddenly I started to cry. It was quite clear to me: as I told Yann, I'd probably never write anything any more. It was all over. I really believed it, and I can still remember the terrible grief I felt. But it didn't get rid of the apparitions in the chimneys. They just watched me grieving." (...)

—Marguerite Duras, "The Chimneys of *India Song*," *Practicalities* (Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)

“(...)During the rehearsals of *India Song*, the text recited by the *Voices* and the guests, as well as the texts describing the shot itself (‘he enters, he looks around, he would like to see her...’) were read aloud and taped. When needed, a second tape recorder took care of the music. And during the shooting this oral scenario was played through in its entirety.

“The shots were long and of course we had to verify the place of the words in the shots. But we did it that way for other reasons as well: first of all, so that the meaning of the shot should be ‘there’ for the actors (and for the camera) at the very moment when they had to express it, to make it come into being; and secondly, so that the meaning should appear and be expressed at the same time *outside them*. *Done there*, expressed *there* and said *there* — so that the expression should partly escape them. If the oral scenario stated, for example: ‘Anne Marie Stretter enters the private drawing room, looks out at the garden,’ then Delphine Seyrig in fact entered and looked at the garden. *But at the same time she was listening to what was said about what she did*. She therefore entered *less*, looked at the garden *less*, but by the same token listened more. What was lost of her entrance and her look was compensated by the words, which expressed it at the same time as she did. The words, the oral scenario, were to be eliminated in the editing and Delphine was to remain alone to effect the entrance and the look at the garden. But the result was there: Delphine’s distraction, due to her listening with her body, is part of the film. In my opinion only this distraction, this subordination of the body to the world, could be called, in the case of *India Song*, a *understanding of its meaning*. Delphine heard it said that at *that moment a woman enters and looked at the garden, but not that it was she herself* who did that; only the verbal context allowed her to feel and to express the *generality of the term*: ‘a woman.’

“When I say ‘meaning’ (*sens*) I mean the word. When I say ‘listening to the meaning’ I mean listening to the word. And by ‘understanding the meaning’ I mean its irreducibility — an irreducibility one must constantly remain close to.

“When I speak of the *meaning (sens)* of a shot I mean its *direction* — the direction it has, the one it imposes on the following shot, and the one that is imposed on it when it itself is superseded. I mean nothing else. The overall meaning of the film, I think, is both the permanence of this direction and the different intensities produced by its flow through the shot it traverses. And, of course, also, the enactment (*mise en oeuvre*) of its end: stopping the flow *here*, in the film, but drying it up *there*, once the film is over — no, *giving it back to the world*. Like a river one might capture and then give back to the waters of the world. And this *giving back* must be seen, must be read, *in the film*. Calcutta, having left its dwelling-place, must take back its place outside the film, in the world at large. Like death. Like silence (...)

—Marguerite Duras, “Notes on *India Song*”

LIVING WITH LIMITS: THE ART OF THE CAMERA ROLL
Program II

Thursday, April 25, 1991

Dripping Water (1969), by Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland; 16mm, b&w, sound, 10.5 minutes.

“I can imagine only St. Francis looking at a water plate and water dripping so lovingly, so respectfully, so serenely. The usual reaction is : ‘Oh what is it anyhow? Just a plate of water dripping.’ But that is a snob remark. That remark has no love for the world, for anything. Snow and Wieland’s film uplifts the object, and leaves the viewer

with a finer attitude toward the world around him' it opens his eyes to the phenomenal world. And how can you love people if you don't love water, stone, grass."

—Jonas Mekas, *New York Times*, August 1969

Group IV: Beaded Light/Dissolving/Beyond (1970), by Barry Gerson; 16mm, color, silent, 12 minutes.

Tourist Movie (1979), by David Gerstein; 16mm, color, silent, 4 minutes (at 16fps).

Blazes (1961), by Robert Breer; 16mm, color, sound, 3 minutes.

"A continuous explosion." (R.B.)

The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar (1976), by Janis Crystal Lipzin; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes.

"Franz Mesmer's pseudo-scientific explanation for the forces of nature—mesmerism—forms the central motif of the Poe short story from which this film derives its title. Two strains dominate the film: one celebrates the mesmeric state induced by the random repetitive movements of a toy car with its flickering colored light and the second traces recollection of the humorous process of shooting the film. Oscillation between these two elements underscore the play between illusions of physical reality and altered perception." (J.C.L.)

Aged in Wood (1975), by Roger Jacoby; 16mm, b&w, sound, 12 minutes.

Narrows Inlet (1980), by David Rimmer; 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes.

"From a boat swaying on its anchor at the head of an inlet, a landscape of pilings, shore, and forest is slowly revealed by time-lapse photography as the morning fog lifts. While the deep space of the landscape evolves out of the fog-enshrouded flatness of early morning, the camera skips from fixed point—suggesting the motion of the human eye while reading." (D.R.)

The Mexican Footage (circa 1954), four 100ft. camera rolls shot by Ron Rice ; 16mm, color/b&w, silent, 10 minutes.

"When Ron Rice died [in December 1964], in Mexico, he left a dozen rolls of exposed film. This sample contains four rolls of beautiful color and black and white, shot in Mexico."

—Jonas Mekas, *Filmmakers' Cooperative Catalogue*, No. 7

LUST FOR ECSTASY:
George Kuchar Mid-Stream

A 5-Program Salute to George Kuchar
George Kuchar present at all programs

This year the San Francisco Cinematheque, in collaboration with the San Francisco International Film Festival, is pleased to honor George Kuchar for his original contribution to the arts of film and video, and for his twenty years of vital activity in the Bay Area. From his outrageous early Hollywood homages through his recent meditations on life and home video, George Kuchar continues to delight and enlighten us all. This 5-part retrospective will give an overview of the wonderfully rich world created over 35 years by one of America's most original artists.

“For three decades George Kuchar’s name has been synonymous with a comic film aesthetic unrivalled in the history of American independent filmmaking for its cheesy brilliance. Preposterous Hollywood melodramas and grade Z adventure films, supermarket tabloid headlines, underground comix, tales of torridly illicit love, unhealthy doses of Catholic dogma, and a generous sampling of other excretions siphoned from the festering bedpan of American sub-culture have all contributed to the creation of one of the most original and idiosyncratic body of films made by any artist who emerged during the 1960s. Noted as much for their buxom leading ladies, unctuous leading men and hilariously chintzy special effects as for their human warmth and underlying, but distinct, sense of pathos, George’s films—and George himself, I might add—have become objects of cult veneration throughout the land, consistently drawing large audiences seeking the promise of tawdry thrills, throbbing passion and cheap spectacle. Working exclusively in ‘amateur’ formats—8mm and 16mm film, 8mm video—George Kuchar turns out pictures which would make a dessicated corpse spring to life and gurgle with pleasure.

“Although Kuchar was born and raised in the Bronx and remains perennially popular in New York (whose denizens may ultimately attempt to reclaim him in the future), his presence and influence have been very strongly felt here in San Francisco, where he has been living, working, and teaching film production classes at the Art Institute for many years. A generation of local artists and aspiring filmmakers have prospered and doubt, perspired in his shadow. Many of them would probably agree that a tribute to his career by the San Francisco International Film Festival is a terrific idea, but one which is entirely premature. If his recent videotapes (*The Weather Diaries*, *The Thursday People*, etc.) are any indication of his current creative prowess, I would suggest, however, that some of George Kuchar’s best work is being produced right now.

“In his early teens, fuelled by an unusually hi-octane pubescent zeal, George and his twin brother Mike began churning out a series of exuberant 8mm costume epics at a frantic pace. The inspiration for these films came directly from the twins’ seething and unfettered imagination—sharpened by enforced hours spent in boring Bronx schoolrooms—and from the films they were seeing in local movie houses. George, whose personal memoirs have occasionally appeared in a variety of suspiciously short-lived journals and magazines, would recall these youthful moments with great passion. ‘[There] in the safety of the theater,’ he once wrote, ‘we’d sit though hour upon hour of Indian squaws being eaten alive by fire ants, debauched pagans coughing up blood as the temples of God crashed down on their intestines, naked monstrosities made from rubber that lumbered out of radiation-poisoned waters to claw the flesh off women who had just lost their virginity. When three hours were up we would leave the theater refreshed and elated, having seen a world molded by adults; a world we would eventually enter.’

“During the late 1950s and 60s films such as *The Naked and the Nude*, *I Was a Teenage Rumpot*, *Lust for Ecstasy* and others which parodied (or, some might say, re-invented) the Hollywood cinema’s production values and narrative formulae catapulted Mike and George into the midst of the burgeoning underground film scene in New York City. There they discovered an appreciative and eager audience for their films and their reputation as the wunderkinder of the film underground was born.

“In 1966, shortly after he and Mike had parted ways to work upon individual projects, George Kuchar produced what has proven to be his most popular and most durable film to date, the legendary *Hold Me While I’m Naked*. Embedded in this universally appealing tale of sexual frustration (if you’ve never seen it you can’t possibly refer to yourself with any degree of seriousness as a knowledgeable film buff) are scenes and strategies which would emerge as stylistic trademarks in most of the films made during the late 1960s through the 70s—the period of high camp and funky melodrama most closely associated with George. The best of these 16mm films—*Eclipse of the Sun Virgin* (1967), *Unstrap Me* (1968), *Nocturne* (1968), *The Sunshine Sisters* (1972), and *The Mongreloid* (1978)—quickly became canonic staples of the independent ‘art’ cinema and sealed Kuchar’s reputation as its undisputed comedic genius. Populated by brilliantly inept non-actors (primarily George’s friends and often George himself), awash in luridly oversaturated color, and propelled by sappy music lifted directly from B-movie soundtracks, these are films which celebrate the zitty side of life: a world of heaving passion and soiled underwear which Hollywood is too timid to show us—a cinema of forbidden longing and desperation forged and shaped in an alternate universe, born of the darkness behind the screen.

“However, one of the great dangers in viewing George’s films as simple comic manifestations of an excremental mind at play is that one can completely overlook the often profound sadness at their core. There is a distinctly self-reflexive and diaristic component in a good deal of George’s work which often contributes to a nagging sense of confusion about when, or if, he might be putting us on and when he isn’t. This is particularly apparent in those of his films in which George figures as a central actor or, in the case of videos like *The Weather Diaries*, where the camera behaves like a living organism surgically attached to his person, depicting with equally privileged intimacy the daily ennui of George’s life or a meteorological disturbance in the Oklahoma sky.

“In the mid-1980s, while most filmmakers viewed video’s increasing ubiquity with great apprehension and dread, a rival medium which had finally come of age and would soon devour them with surging electromagnetic gusto, George acquired an 8mm camcorder and began experimenting with it in ways which are astounding and delighting a new generation of viewers. As spontaneity and improvisation had always been cornerstones of George’s film aesthetic, video’s immediacy, ease of operation and tremendous cost-effectiveness were qualities which he could eagerly embrace and employ to great effect.

“In addition, the many clunky accoutrements of filmmaking were no longer necessary. George needed only the camera, something at which to point it and...himself. As a result he is turning out videotapes with incredible speed and zest. Very funny stuff, very sad stuff; whichever way the weather turns, George is there to show us.

“If alien beings successfully invade and conquer the planet in the next twenty-five years and come bearing bizarre, new image-making devices (for home use only, naturally), I have no doubt that George Kuchar will be the first earthling invited to play with them.”

—Albert Kilchesty

Schedule of screenings:

April 27
Secret Secretions

Weather Diary #3 (1988); video-8, color, sound, 20 minutes.

Scarlet Droppings (1990); video-8, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Migration of the Blubberoids (1989); video-8, color, sound, 15 minutes.

500 Millibars to Ecstasy (1989); video-8, color, sound, 20 minutes.

Sherman Acres, Chapters 3 & 6 (1991); video-8, color, sound, 20 min.

April 28

The Devil’s Cleavage (1973); 16mm, b&w, sound, 112 minutes.

April 30
A Kuchar Sampler

Tootsies in Autumn (1963), with Mike Kuchar; Reg. 8mm, color, sound, 10 min.

Eclipse of the Sun Virgin (1967); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Pagan Rhapsody (1970); 16mm, color, sound, 23 minutes.

The Nocturnal Immaculation (1980); 16mm, b&w, sound, 27 minutes.

Tempest in a Teapot (1990); Video-8, color, sound, 17 minutes.

Foto-Spread (1991); Video-8, color, sound

May 6

An Appendum of Academic Atrocities

Club Vatican (1984); 16mm, sound, 10 minutes.

The Asphalt Ribbon (1977); 16mm, b&w, sound, 20 minutes.

The Oneers (1982); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes.

Symphony for a Sinner (1979); 16mm, b&w, sound, 56 minutes.

May 6

***LUST FOR ECSTASY*
A Tribute to George Kuchar**

Welcoming remarks by Laura Thielen, Associate Director of Programming of the San Francisco Film Society.

Introductory remarks by Steve Anker, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Cinematheque.

Special Tributes by Carla Liss (founder of the London Filmmakers Cooperative and performance actress who has appeared in many George Kuchar works including the recently completed *Sherman's Acres*); Rock Ross (filmmaker who helped create the No Nothing Cinema); and Edith Kramer (Director and Curator of the Pacific Film Archive).

Film and video program:

I Was a Teenage Rumpot (1960), directed by George and Mike Kuchar; 8mm, color, sound, 10 minutes. Print from Anthology Film Archives.

Mosholu Holiday (1966); 16mm, b&w, sound, 10 minutes.

Hold Me While I'm Naked (1966); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Back to Nature (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes.

Wild Night in El Reno (1977); 16mm, color, sound, 6 min.

The Mongreloid (1978); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes.

Cattle Mutilations (1983); 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes.

Fill Thy Crack with Whiteness (1989); Video-8, color, sound, 14 minutes.

INTIMATE DOMAINS
Films by Gunvor Nelson and Lynne Sachs
Both Artists in Person

Thursday, May 2, 1991

The House of Science: a museum of false facts (1991), Lynne Sachs; 16mm, color, sound, 30 minutes.

Sachs' ambitious film interweaves collages, found footage, home movies, journal entries, and original footage to uncover how the divisions of art and science exert pressure on women's self conceptions and roles. She particularly questions the representations of the body as initiating an identity reflective of territorialization rather than incorporation. "I was a triangle, feeling a wholeness somewhere between my elbows and the nape of my neck. Until the bridle came and created divisions, areas of artificial mystique, a separation of space between the functional arm and the sexual breast. Territory." Not only does Sachs reveal the miscellaneous constructions educating and preparing young women, but her vision proposes an alternative domain—a poetic space in which the body is constitutive of and by female agency. The density of the text combined with fertile imagery and an elaborately punctuating soundtrack duplicates the confusion and plethora of associations and directions a young initiate might feel. The film essentially recreates for the viewer the simultaneous distancing and eroticizing, claiming and effacing of this both highly personal and culturally defining realm. Sachs shows a remarkable ability to synthesize personal, theoretical and historical motives into a cohesive poetic narrative. Her fluency within the various mediums of text, collage, and filmmaking marks her as a versatile and gifted new voice in avant-garde cinema. Her filmmaking subverts the tendency to delineate and thereby compartmentalize theory and practice, body and mind. This concept is illustrated by the collage of an exposed brain on the shoulders and neck of a woman. One of the most disturbing implications of the socially prescribed connection between behavior and physiognomy is addressed in the section revolving around the excerpt of 19th century anthropologist Cesare Lombroso's diatribe on the connection of female anatomy types and crime. Not only do her characters enact the absurdity and danger of this conspiracy, but they are juxtaposed with equally startling territories such as the science of reproduction. She unravels and shifts these dictates in our perceptions forging a different type of rigorous self examination and knowledge. Her task suggests a new, feminized bildungsroman in which the coming of age rituals are recast into a potent web for affirmation and growth.

* * *

Time Being (1991), Gunvor Nelson; 16mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes.

This extraordinary film manages to craft a delicate portrait of her mother through time and refracted light while unfolding in purple silence the relationship of Nelson and her mother as well.

Natural Features (1990), Gunvor Nelson; 16mm, color, sound, 30 minutes.

"The fifth film in the series of collage films I call 'field studies'. Here I used cut-outs, photographs, mirrors, water, toys, paint, ink...in many different combinations. The central theme is faces. A dark delicacy lingers." (G. N.)

Nelson's films transport the viewer on an extraordinary journey into a twin and novel landscape—both unexpectedly foreign and intuitively dear. This magical world is both vulgar and sublime. The unusual poetry of her vision is astonishingly nonverbal. Even her use of sound harkens an experience that is not restrictively linguistic, but one which uses the voice and other sounds for their ability to locate and inspire meaning explosively through texture as well as content. Her visceral imagery fluidly traverses a subtle sensibility by knitting a texture of cultural memory, personal territories, and emotional rhythms. The films seem to search out, feeling with mysterious tactility from frame to frame, cut to cut, inviting an extent of emotional responses which can only be found without words. Her path sets to differentiating and pulling into perception what might have previously been unsought or repressed. She creates a view just beneath the surface that glimpses this hitherto forgotten or perhaps privatized terrain. We are surprised, coaxed, reminded and invented. Pockets of color and association infuse the film with emotional movement and preempt the need for a linear narrative to spell desire. Nelson's film shows that desire enacts and articulates an unconscious and rarely explored form of narrative. The place she has crafted is not a piece from the architecture of ideas, but a fecund and resonant field of dreams. The libidinal coherence of Nelson's work illustrates Laplanche and Pontalis' speculation that "...the fantasmatic is 'constantly drawing in new material' thereby indicating that it is far from closed—that, on the contrary, it is always absorbing the world outside." At the same time, Nelson's animated episodes confirm Kaja Silverman's argument, "that it (the fantasmatic) is being continually drawn into new social and political alignments, which may even lead to important 'scenic' changes." Her nodal point extends beyond establishing herself as a "speaking" subject into an area where we participate in the innermost mouthings of desire for divestiture... Rather than establishing the relationship between Gunvor Nelson and her film, it is more timely to inquire about the position that she has invoked for us to occupy through a series of reflections, replications, and resonances. This position is curiously intoxicating and original. It is not difficult to imagine why Amos Vogel called her "the true poetess of the visual cinema."

—Notes by Crosby McCloy

CCCP SAMPLER: SOVIET MUSIC, POETRY & FILM

Saturday, May 4, 1991

Following last year's *Red Fish in America* series, Cinematheque and Canyon Cinema sent filmmaker Michael Wallin and dozens of experimental films to the USSR as part of a major San Francisco-Moscow cultural exchange. Glasnost continues in this marathon evening of Soviet art, featuring poets Dmitri Prigov, Vladimir Druk, and Lev Rubinstein; filmmakers Yuri Arabov and Igor Aleinikov; percussionist Garrick Vinogradov; and performance artist Sasha Tihij. Part of *Crossing Boundaries: The Soviet New Wave*, this program was produced by The Lab, co-sponsored with the Center for Creative Initiatives (USSR) and the San Francisco Art Institute.

MICHAEL BRYNNTRUP & MARIA BROOKE DAMMKOEHLER

Filmmaker Michael Brynntrup in person

Sunday, May 5, 1991

"Since the beginning of the twenties many of the most important works in experimental cinema have been the personal films, 'psycho dramas', representing individual feelings and thoughts against the censored official

culture. These films have always developed new forms of expression to convey their subjects. Michael Bryntrup's films belong in the context of this tradition because they are radical, personal, and because he cultivated his own new narrative style with them."

—Birgit Hein

Films by Michael Bryntrup:

Testamento Memori (1986); Super-8mm, 8 minutes.

I am now going to experience a possible birth — the procedure of which can obviously vary.

Narziss und Echo (*Naricissus and Echo*, 1989); 16mm, 14 minutes.

A film in the form of a riddle is a special kind of entertainment film whereby the film's content has to be deduced from the film's formal structure.

Zauberei, das - Totentanz 5 (*Witchcraft, the - Dance of Death 5*, 1989); 16mm (from Super-8mm), 4 minutes.
Deathbird birds, e.g. raven, dove as animals of the soul (*see* soul).

Der Hieronymus - Totentanz 6 (*Hieronymus - Dance of Death 6* (1989); 16mm (from Super-8mm), 7 minutes.
Gravediggers species of beetles, black, live off cadavers of small animals, which they roll into ball.

Die Statik der Eselsbrücken (1990); 16mm, 21 minutes.

Formal proofs through pregnant experiments on one's own body. Rests and tests from the inquiry of prototypes.

—Michael Bryntrup

* * *

Sans Serif (1988), by Maria Brooke Dammkoehler; 16mm, b&w, sound, 39 minutes.

"...*Sans Serif* can best be described as a series of events in which two illusions, one female, one male, who appear to be trapped on a movie set, play out, in truly excruciating longeurs the very feminine 'stuff of entertainment': lush and painful torchsongs, campy and quite pathological tangos, arcane trysts, garden decadence, indefatigable posing, lust and death refined into a beauty of suffering. An interterminal pleasure is established amidst a stylized milieu of Hollywood's Golden Era....Rather than forsaking dominant conventions and laying claim to a new language, *Sans Serif* treats Hollywood like an exhibit, breathes into it, caresses it ceaselessly. Finally (and then some) it exceeds its excesses, allowing them to exhaust themselves into their inevitable twilight. *Sans Serif* uses pleasure as an instrument of torture.

"*Sans Serif* is a series of pseudo-narrative events, laid end to end, a stringing together of the cliché's of Hollywood film language. These images are linked, not by plot, narrative inevitability or linear necessity, but by the stylistics of implication and anticipation. Suspense is constructed out of the connoisseur-like attention to a pose or a glance, a series of arrestments which in their total effect narrate 'woman' as a figure of desire."

—Drift Distribution Catalog No. 1

CRISIS MEDIA

37°49'N/122°W: New Bay Area Work
Program III

Thursday, May 9, 1991

Echo Anthem (1991), by Mark Street; 16mm, color, sound, 8 minutes.

"Using hand manipulated images, *Echo Anthem* attempts to uncover the underbelly of jingoism in 1991 America, and show its destructive conclusion. In a perverse twist, the film invites the viewer to be at once soothed and repulsed by the seething display of the flag, and what it leads to.

"The film establishes a tension between visual beauty and narrative and thematic concerns. *Echo Anthem* is made up of three sections, each suggesting the same sequence of events. The viewer is challenged to fluctuate between states — from being engulfed by the visuals to being concerned about the narrative particulars and thematic possibilities." (M.S.)

The Iraq Campaign 1991 (a Television History) (1991), by Phil Patiris; 1/2" videotape, 28 minutes.

Behold, I Come Quickly: The Strange Revelations of Reverend Swaggart (1990), by Bob Paris; 1/2" videotape, 5.5 minutes.

"A fevered excursion across the psychic terrain of America's most charismatic TV preacher. *Behold...* documents Jimmy Swaggart's tumultuous rise, fall and prophesied return to glory through an onslaught of appropriated images. The video explores the religious rhetoric of Swaggart — its power and intensity, its sexual repression and projection, its frenzied apocalyptic underpinnings. What emerges is a dense and dizzying portrait of the infamous clergyman in all his passion, hypocrisy and telegenic genius. *Behold...* shows Swaggart's strange blend of sacred fervor, sexual energy and prophetic aspiration — here, the second coming has a fleshy reverberation and Reverend Swaggart's holy impulses become closely attuned to those of his rocking 'bad seed' cousin, Jerry Lee Lewis." (B.P.)

We Peel Your World (1991), by Lise Swenson and Fred Rinne; 1/2" videotape, 28 minutes.

"*We Peel Your World* started as a Saturday afternoon whimsy. Frustrated in the aftermath of the war, Fred Rinne and I wanted to take some time off and have a good time with the video medium. Little did we know that this little whimsy of ours would end up involving 34 people, 4 animals and be almost 30 minutes long. It's been a very gratifying collaborative process however, and be warned, we intend to do it again" —L.S.

Political Gestures (1989/1991), by Larry Kless; 3/4" videotape, 3 minutes.

"*Political Gestures* is a study of the urban textures which reflect personal ideologies injected into the public sphere.

"Expressions of individuals and groups, political agendas are framed within this time capsule of events which chronicles the passing of 1989 to 1990. The original footage was shot on Super-8mm film, mainly frame by frame as a daily image document." (L.K.)

Malfunction (1990), by Scott Davey; 3/4" videotape, 5 minutes.

"*Malfunction* depicts, in the form of computer graphics and electronic sound, a series of instructions, reassurances and messages to the inhabitants of an industrial accident. They are provided with cold comfort, to say the least.

"*Malfunction* was created on an Amiga computer, using pro Video Plus software. The sound was created on a modular analog synthesis system." (S.D.)

**EDGES OF PERCEPTION:
Film and Sound Performances by Rick Corrigan, Paul Lundahl
and Doll Parts**

Saturday, May 11, 1991

Microscopic Incidents from Asleep at War (1991), by Paul Lundahl; sound and film installation, 20 minutes.
Sound by Rick Corrigan.

Visions in Meditation #3 (1990), by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.
Soundtrack composed by Rick Corrigan.

Shoreline Dropped from a Great Height (1990), by Paul Lundahl; 3 Super-8mm films projected simultaneously
on 3 screens, color, sound, 12 minutes.
Live and recorded soundtrack performed by Rick Corrigan.

Three screens present a problem of attention: important events occur on the periphery and can be missed
altogether. The images were filmed at The Exploratorium, in Nicaragua and at Rocky Flats nuclear weapons
facility on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

Asleep at War (1991), by Paul Lundahl; Super-8mm and 8mm videotape installation, b&w/color, sound, 12
minutes.

Composed of time lapse studies of the body at sleep and images taken from the recent televised war as an
illumination of the national consent for slaughter as a form of "shared emotional disorder, with diagnostic
symptoms, psychodynamics and childhood origins very similar to the disorders that occur in individuals."

—Lloyd DeMause

Doll Parts; 30 minute performance.

Lynne Ablondi: Vocals, stringed instruments and synthesis
Rick Corrigan: Tape composition, synthesis and stringed instruments
Gretchen LeMaistre: Lighting and visual coordination.

"Song-cycle theater in a playground of dysphoria." —R.C.

—Notes by Paul Lundahl

**GLEN OR GLENDA
by Ed Wood Jr.**

Sunday, May 12, 1991

Glen or Glenda (1953), by Ed Wood Jr.; 16mm, b&w, sound.
With Bela Lugosi, Lyle Talbot, Timothy Farrell, Dolores Fuller, Daniel Davis

An exploitation film from the 50s that can best be described as 'campy' and 'strange.' It deals with a subject that is, to say the least, different. Bela Lugosi (in one of his last film appearances, considered 'lost' for some time) is the slightly sinister narrator, a 'spirit' of sorts (although he is billed as 'The Scientist' in the credits) whose living room looks like a witch doctor's den (complete with skeleton on the wall). As Lugosi comments on humanity and the plot in tones ranging from eloquent to sardonic to just plain cryptic, *Glen or Glenda* has a doctor telling a bewildered police inspector (who has just dealt with a very bizarre suicide) the story of 'Glen,' a good-looking chap with an attractive fiancée...and a slight 'quirk' — he likes to dress up in women's clothing from time to time. Besides following Glen's torment and how he finally reveals all to his girl, the film also relates the case of a man who underwent a sex-change operation to become a woman.

FELIX - THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CAT
Curated and presented by John Canemaker

Thursday, May 16, 1991

During the 1920s, the art of animation grew from a fledgling, primitive novelty into a full-grown industry. At the forefront of this transformation was Felix the Cat, creation of animator Otto Messmer. Beginning in 1919 with *Feline Follies* and continuing until he was eclipsed by Disney's Mickey Mouse in 1928, Felix enjoyed unprecedented popularity which "cut through age, class and cultural barriers." Felix the Cat had become the mascot of an era. To a large degree, this popularity was the result of Messmer's imaginative genius, which endowed Felix with a personality no other animated character had shown before. While other cartoon characters of the day were at best primarily involved with other objects or characters within the films, the character of Felix engaged audiences by making direct eye contact, signaling intentions and sharing responses. As situations in the Felix cartoons arose, the personality of the lucky cat emerged in the consistently imaginative and inventive solutions he devised to resolve the various situations in the plots of the films. Messmer, "would create simple symbols of animal characters, who in turn make brilliant use of metamorphosis."

As much as Otto Messmer had to do with the creation of the actual Felix cartoons, there was another key figure, Pat Sullivan, who acted as producer of the films. Sullivan's tenacious, wheeler-dealer personality was an essential ingredient to negotiating the sale of the films. During the era of Felix's preeminence in the cartoon world, there were numerous contractual dealings and conflicts, some quite embittered, which took Sullivan in and out of legal battles. Throughout these ordeals he somehow miraculously emerged with the rights to the cartoon. However, throughout his life Sullivan took full credit for the production of Felix the Cat, referring to Messmer as an assistant. It was not until the mid-1970s that Messmer's role as the creator of Felix the Cat would be publicly recognized and acknowledged.

The Sullivan Studio produced over 150 films during the period from 1919 to 1930. Despite some of the racial, ethnic and sexual stereotypes presented in the films, the Felix cartoons speak to the sensibilities of the Jazz Age. The elegant simplicity of the sparse black and white drawings and the figure of Felix, in style and appearance, were more influenced by cubism and the art of the 20s than by the art nouveau of the previous era. "The limited technology of the silent cartoons, Messmer's special genius, and the elegant simplicity of Felix were a perfect combination."

Above quotes from *Felix, the Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*, by John Canemaker, published by Pantheon Books, 1991.

John Canemaker is a documentary filmmaker, animator, lecturer, animation historian, writer, commercial producer, film director and animation collector. He is currently head of the animation program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Tonight's program includes:

(all titles produced by Pat Sullivan, Directed by Otto Messmer)

Feline Follies (1919); 16mm, b&w, silent, 4 minutes.

Felix Turns the Tide (1922); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix Revolts (1923); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in the Cold Rush (1925); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in Eats Are West (1925); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat Hits the Deck (1927); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in Arabiatics (1928); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in Switches Witches (1927); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in Astonomeows (1928); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

Felix the Cat in Comicalamities (1928); 16mm, b&w, silent, 7 minutes.

—Notes by Jerome Carolfi

OPEN SCREENING HIGHLIGHTS 1990-91

Curated and Presented by Lissa Gibbs

Saturday, May 18, 1991

Once again the Cinematheque's season of open screenings brought out many new and original works of film and video. Tonight's program represents some of the highlights of the three open screenings during the 1990-91 season which included more than 50 films and videos. Many thanks to all of the artists who shared their work and the receptive and enthusiastic audiences who participated in the success of the season.

—Lissa Gibbs

* * *

Step Off a Ten Foot Platform With Your Clothes On (1990), by Scott Miller; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes.
"This film is to metaphysics what canned ham is to Daylight Savings Time. Trust me." (S.M.)

The Blanket (1990), by Dan Janos; Super-8mm, color, sound on cassette, 7 minutes.

"Super New York Black Chicago Blues Friends and People Color White Night Day Subway Matt Rob Money Eight Ball Snow Photo Blanket Beer. Memories of travels seen though film, photographs, and music." (D.J.)

Ordinary Goddesses (1990), by Leora Forstein; 16mm, color, sound 17 minutes.

"An experimental, personal film exploring women's everyday spirituality using film collage and poetry." (L.F.)

Entre Roca Y Hueso (work-in-progress), by Al Hernandez; 16mm, b&w, silent, 2.5 minutes.

"The footage is part of a film for which I received a grant from Film Arts Foundation. Though the theme seems to change from day to day as I change, the constant inspiration is the visual relationship between man, nature, and 'the way of things,' call it the Tao. Most of the visuals are fabricated from imagination using miniature props, masks, and puppets. This footage opens the film. It is an imaginary microscopic landscape. Also in this reel, the camera floats above people in sleep. Both of these realities of our existence hint at the complexity within the surface of our lives. Sounds redundant? In the end, *Entre Roca Y Hueso* is a dance film, everything dances, or let's say wiggles—animal costumed men and women, dinosaurs, cocoons, light on water, clouds, dreams. Enough." (A.H.)

The Age of Man, by Zeke Mazur and Daniel Stolzenberg; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 11 minutes.

"This unusual documentary passes through the projector for eleven uncertain minutes, during which a mysterious narrator employs photographs, diagrams, and a slide show to relate the events of two dreams involving a thirteen year-old girl, a three-headed master figure, a jet of neon-blue liquid, and a surprising mutation of the ventral region. A related segment of the film reveals the Backwash Process." (Z.M. & D.S.)

Moondance (1990) by Thomas Korschil; Super-8mm, b&w, silent, 3.5 minutes.

"To move matter and lose it—a static camera (the wind-moved palm trees in foreground falsely suggests camera movement) captures a rare event which appears somewhat faint on the screen due to special night time photography techniques. Animating big things." (T.K.)

Of Significant Importance (1991) by Kurt Easterwood; 16mm, b&w, silent, 6 minutes.

"I shot this film with a finger on the pulse of things that go bump in the night, then roll over and play dead in the morning. This film is an establishing shot, a come on, a pay per view striptease. I'm still looking for my money shot, and wondering whether you will respect me in the morning." (K.E.)

KICK THAT HABIT MAN! (1989) by Francois Miron; 16mm, color, sound, 2.5 minutes.

"KICK THAT HABIT MAN! is a permutation poem by Brion Gysin; it is all the possible order in which the four words can be arranged. This optically printed film uses flicker (reminiscent of the Brion Gysin Dream Machine) and color changes, in and out of sync with the words alternating with several repetitions and permutations of images illustrating the action. Soon after the possibilities are exhausted, the film ends. The soundtrack is by Monte Cazazza." (F.M.)

A GOOD NIGHT FOR THE MOVIES
Films by Klaus Wyborny and Samuel Fuller

Sunday, May 26, 1991

Unreachable Homeless (1978), by Klaus Wyborny; 16mm, color, silent, 33 minutes.

"With its staccato rhythms, layered superimpositions, and complex system of fades and filters, this incredibly

precise half-hour barrage of German suburban/industrial landscapes synthesizes and recapitulates much of the avant-garde vocabulary developed over the last 20 years. I put it first [on my ten best list] not only for itself but also in recognition of the other extraordinary films that the versatile Wyborny premiered here last spring [of 1978]..."

—Jim Hoberman, "The Best of the Apples and Pears," *Village Voice*, January 1, 1979

Fixed Bayonets (1951); written and directed by Samuel Fuller; 16mm, b&w, sound, 93 minutes.

Photographed by Lucien Ballard; Music by Roy Webb; Cast: Richard Basehart, Gene Evans, Michael O'Shea, Richard Hylton, Crag Hill.

"Sam Fuller's narratives investigate the ways that belonging to a social group simultaneously functions to sustain and nurture individual identity and, conversely, to pose all sorts of emotional and ideological threats to that identity. Fuller's characters are caught between a solitude that is both liberating and debilitating, and a communality that is both supportive and oppressive. Unlike, say, Howard Hawks, whose films suggest the triumph of the group over egoism, Fuller is more cynical and show that neither isolation nor group membership is without its hardships and tensions.

"Many of the films touch upon a broad kind of belonging: membership in a nation, specifically the United States, as a driving idea and ideal, national identity becoming a reflection of person identity..."

"Similarly, in several films, such as *House of Bamboo*, *Underworld USA*, and *Pickup on South Street*, the narrative will begin by suggesting the moral separation of good guys and bad guys, but will then continue to demonstrate their parallelism, their interweaving, even blurring....

"At a narrower level of group concern, Fuller's films examine the family as a force that can be nurturing, but is often stifling and riddled with contradictions. Not accidentally, many of Fuller's films concentrate on childless or parentless figures: the family here is not a given but something that one loses or that one has to grope towards. Often, the families that do exist are, for Fuller, like the nation-state initially presenting an aura of innocent respectability but ultimately revealing a corruption and rotted perversity....

"Love, to be sure, is a redemptive promise in Fuller's films but it is run through by doubt, anger, mistrust, deception. Any reciprocity or sharing that Fuller's characters achieve comes at a great price ranging from mental and physical pain to death....Against the possibility of love (which, if it ever comes, does so miraculously as to call its own efficacy into doubt), Fuller's films emphasize a world where everyone is potentially an outsider and therefore a mystery and even a menace. No scene in Fuller's cinema encapsulates this better than the opening of *Pickup on South Street* where a filled subway car becomes the site of intrigued and intriguing glances as a group of strangers warily survey each other as potential victims and victimizers....

"In a world of distrust, where love can easily betray, the Fuller character survives either by fighting for the last vestiges of an honest, uncorrupted love (in the most optimistic of the films) or, in the more cynical cases, by displacing emotional attachment from people to idea; to myths of masculine power in *Forty Guns*; to obsessions; to mercenary self-interest; to political and social ideals; or to a professionalism that finally means doing nothing other than doing your job right without thinking about it. This is especially the case in Fuller's war films which show characters driven to survive for survival's sake, existence being defined in *Merrill's Marauders* as 'put(ting) one foot in front of the other.'

"Fuller's style too is one based on tensions; a conflict of techniques that one can read as an enactment for the spectator of Fuller themes. Fuller is both a director of rapid, abrupt, shocking montage, and a director who uses extremely long takes incorporating a complex mix of camera movement and character action. Fuller's style is the

opposite of graceful; his style seems to suggest that in a world where grace provides little redemption, its utilization would be a kind of lie.”

—Dana B. Polan, *International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers*, Vol. II

Samuel Fuller Filmography:

I Shot Jesse James (1949)
The Baron of Arizona (1950)
The Steel Helmet (1950)
Fixed Bayonets (1951)
Park Row (1952)
Pickup on South Street (1953)
Hell and High Water (1954)
House of Bamboo (1955)
Run of the Arrow (1957)
China Gate (1957)
Forty Guns (1957)
Verboten! (1958)
The Crimson Kimono (1959)
Underworld USA (1961)
Merrill's Marauders (1961)
Shock Corridor (1963)
The Naked Kiss (1964)
Caine (1967)
Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street (1972)
The Big Red One (1980)
The White Dog (1982)
Thieves After Dark (1983)

MARGARET CURTIS & ALAN SONDHEIM

Both artists in person

Thursday, May 30, 1991

Clear White Fruit (1990); 1/2" videotape, 7 minutes.

Initially shot in Pixelvision, this piece deals with memory and its compression. Layered voices flow around one another in a somewhat cyclical yet non-repetitive manner. Childhood memories spill into the gaps of adult rationality, as if the recent loss of a relationship has its origins elsewhere.

Untitled (1990); 1/2" videotape, 3 minutes.

This piece explores the intense and often violent world of childhood fantasy. The female voice-over recalls the anxiety such behavior creates in adults—yearning for while denying the freedom of expression/aggression permitted the young girl. The conflict between female child and adult carries the psychological tension of the work.

The Girding (1990); 1/2" videotape, 5 minutes.

Images of water both flowing unrestrained and channeled comprise a major portion of this work dealing with personality formation and the cultural constructs underlying sexuality. Language is broken and reduced to mere sound—the language of the body, and the beginning of the personality. Flows are hardened into ideologies which assault the body devoid of dimension.

—Margaret Curtis

Alan Sondheim on his recent films:

My work is concerned with the fragmented space of language and desire, surrounding the viewer with its representation...My work has no beginning and ending, no titles; it is a particulation of continuous and contradictory diegetic strands that make up everyday life...My work refuses the seeds of essentialism, opting instead for displacement of part-objects and memories that are produced, reproduced, exhausted, abandoned...it is an interminable analysis of the stuttering of language, sexuality, body. My work is unlike any other filmwork, and must be viewed accordingly, from a position perhaps of tense passivity...it exists entirely elsewhere than 'following the plot,' issues of 'identification' and so forth....

God (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 9 minutes.

God is concerned with language and hysteria in relation to religious and sexual transfiguration. Inverting the material in *Best Lovers* and other 1990 work, *God* is highly textual; word processor readout is played against voiceover material. *God* deals with the relationships between religion and sexuality, and between theology and language.

Best Lovers of Numerous Others (1990), by Alan Sondheim with Margaret Curtis; 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes.

A complex account and accounting-for a relationship spelled out against the productions of language and sexuality. Silence and blank screen are played one against the other permitting the viewer to concentrate on various 'shifts' of focus, and a loss/introjection occurring within empty fields. The film exists as a slow descent into the body; on a more surface level it analyzes and operates upon male heterosexuality. Live sound and voiceover are often intermixed, simultaneously dealing with despair combined with sexual harshness, and a real romanticization of intersubjectivity. The film stutters through occasionally beautiful and seductive imagery, but its main import is the psychoanalytical interior of a heterosexual couple.

Thought (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

An analysis of the site of speech in relation to 'jumbled' thought, and both in relation to preconscious material. Images are almost invisible at times, and at times a computer readout carries the only text, presented against a stereotypical western 'orientalized' music. The sound is sped up and slowed down, almost randomly; this is the result of a live mix deliberately 'devouring' earlier filmtracks, used as memory devices. The text in the first part, presented on word processor screen, 'returns' the spectator to the necessity for a conscious interpretation of written material; this return dissolves in the second part. The first part also problematizes the spectator's ethnicity and 'site/sight' in relation to the film as a whole.

Sleazy and The Year 3000 (1987-88); 16mm, color, sound, 50 minutes.

The projection from the present into the future which reveals the interiority of the present. This inordinately complex work is in two parts, with voiceover by Marlis Schmidt; the first, *Sleazy*, is a drawn-out analysis of a car crash taken from a 1960s film with interspersed dialog and sound directly related to the body. The second and longer part, *The Year 3000*, is based on a hypothetical projection of the filmmaker from the present into the future—its main concern is the nature of projection itself, not its 'results'. The film is always in a state of suspension and a state which is also without a goal. At the same time, a 'narrative' begins to develop half-way through, a narrative

ranging from an interview with a sociologist at the University of Texas, Dallas, who purportedly bombed a faculty meeting, to the 'Louie' section at the end which recounts the contradictions inherent in a visit to 'The Museum of the Twentieth Century' by characters under-going sex-change operations. The narration ends senselessly; to some extent, the film is about the construction of narration, and how narration creates its own goals.

—Alan Sondheim

TWISTING BIOGRAPHICAL PATHS
Videotapes by Mark Paradis and Leslie Thornton

Saturday, June 1, 1991

Tonight the Cinematheque continues its ongoing series of programs in conjunction with the publication of *Cinematograph*, Volume 4. The programs are intended to reflect and expand upon issues addressed in the volume, particularly in relation to the question, "Is there such a thing as non-fiction cinema?" Both Paradis' *Le Voyage de L'Ogre* and Thornton's *There Was an Unseen Cloud Moving* are discussed in Volume 4.

* * *

There Was an Unseen Cloud Moving (1987), by Leslie Thornton; 3/4" videotape, 60 minutes.

There Was an Unseen Cloud Moving uses a group of actresses to represent the life of the 19th century writer Isabelle Eberhardt who left Europe and embraced Islam. "Eberhardt, in Thornton's tape, is a contradictory figure who blurs the distinctions between legend and biography, single and multiple identities. The video follows the trajectory of Eberhardt's drive to escape the claustrophobia of Europe, while looking back over her shoulder at the culture she renounced. *Unseen Cloud* treats Isabelle as a focus more in terms of form than 'biography;' as a subjectivity, she is the site of a variety of Victorian preoccupations, a metaphorical 'occupied territory,' from which her nomadic journey was travelled. As a work with a 'historical' subject matter, *Unseen Cloud* resists the 'parlour' model of history—that the past can be salvaged and displayed in the halls of our period, or, that the past speaks from a place that is distinct from the present...Isabelle Eberhardt is a contemporary figure for feminism. She reflects ideas that are significant to us in our context—the overdetermined self that shatters, the voluntary exile or nomad, the woman as an agent of her own desire, not the product or reflection of another's. This biography of Eberhardt is then very much a contemporary portrait, a narrative that unravels the limiting notion of 'the true story' and writes along the traces of Eberhardt's legend, so that she is not reduced to another occupied territory but becomes known as an enigma."

—Linda Peckham, *Cinematograph*, Vol. 4

Le Voyage de L'Ogre (*The Path of the Ogre*, 1981), by Marc Paradis; 3/4" videotape, 24 minutes.

Le Voyage de L'Ogre is Canadian playwright and director Mark Paradis' videotape exploring the phenomenon of mass murderer John Gacy. Neither documentary nor biography, *Le Voyage de L'Ogre* is a fragmented, non-linear meditation on John Gacy and his victims. This is a video essay which also examines the relationship between the director and the actor, documentary and fiction, the real and the imaginary. In addition, Paradis' tape raises several issues about contemporary media production and modes of address. One such issue is the difficulty of the conventional documentary form to adequately portray or recreate its subject's life. This problem has resulted in a body of work that takes as its starting point a fictitious mediation/re-creation of key events in the life of the work's subject. Although this strategy mimics literary essay form rather than documentary or dramatic narrative, it integrates both forms in presenting its subject. In *Le Voyage de L'Ogre* this is most evident by the way Paradis

deprives the viewer of information about Gacy. With the exception of sketchy biographical information at the beginning and end of the tape, Paradis concentrates on a meditation on Gacy and mass murder, using a fictional and autobiographical approach to explore his subject. Using Gacy as the starting point, the tape covers a terrain which touches on possible reasons (repression, fear, punishment, desire, and fetish) for the development of a mass murder.

— Jack Walsh, *Cinematograph*, Vol. 4.

ROBERTA CANTOW AND JAY ROSENBLATT
Both filmmakers in person

Sunday, June 2, 1991

Brain in the Desert (1990), by Jay Rosenblatt & Jennifer Seaman; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes.
"A haunting and humorous film about relationships and insects." (J.R.)

Paris X2 (1988), by Jay Rosenblatt; 16mm, b&w, sound, 26 minutes.

"*Paris X2* is a story about love and about love stories. It is about the static and the electricity; the pain of letting go and the attempt to re-capture. It is an experimental re-telling of a love affair through fragments and distortions of memory. The narrative and myths of romantic love are deconstructed against a backdrop of Paris and Hollywood." (J.R.)

"Truth — or perhaps the constant struggle to find it, is the real subject of this film. Shots of Hollywood 'goddess' types are frozen in the frame, stretched almost to the point of breaking, like human thoughts struggling through oppressive chains of limiting images....From a narrative point of view the film defies analysis; but it is not strictly a narrative: it is more like a poem which lives on in the mind after the final shot, still struggling for the elusive truth contained in a flood of conflicting images."

—Film/Tape World

Short of Breath (1990), by Jay Rosenblatt; 16mm, b&w/color, sound, 10 minutes.

"What goes on behind closed doors? An anatomy of a suicide. A loss of innocence. A cry for love. A gasping for breath. *Short of Breath* is a dissection of a psychotherapy session which takes us on an uncomfortable journey through the emotional landscape of a depressed woman and her young son." (J.R.)

The Book of Laughs (1987), by Roberta Cantow; 16mm, color, sound, 45 minutes.

The Book of Laughs "...moves freely through time, portraying two sisters as kids, teens and adults. The complex sound track, dominated by the younger sister's letters to the older, and visual track, search through fragmentary memories and experiences in an attempt to understand, not so much the sisters individually, as their interactions. Shared moments are returned to, memories teased out, particularly times when a mood shifts — from banter to blows, intimacy to coolness, understanding to confusion, vitality to loss. This process has a familiar, almost archetypal quality to it, so that in the end, it is perhaps a collective experience that is probed."

—Kathy Gertiz

NEW BY STAN BRAKHAGE
Program II

Thursday, June 6, 1991

Tonight we present our second program this year of new work by Stan Brakhage. In addition to the six films completed within the last two years, we are showing a new print of Brakhage's *The Dead*, originally made in 1960.

Babylon Series #2 (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes.

"Out of the vagaries of sometime beseeching repetitive light patterns, and the delicately variable rhythms of thought process, the imagination of The Monumental and of the Ephemeral are born to mind hard as nails."

The Dead (1960); 16mm, color, silent, 11 minutes.

"Europe, weighted down so much with that past, was *The Dead*. I was always Tourist there; I couldn't live in it. The graveyard could stand for all my view of Europe, for all the concerns with past art, for involvement with symbol. *The Dead* became my first work, in which things that might very easily be taken as symbols were so photographed as to destroy all their symbolic potential. The action of making *The Dead* kept me alive."

The Thatch of Night (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes.

"As a poem might be said to contain the night through a weave of words, so have I in this film attempted such a container with warp and woof of emblematic visions. (Homage to Marie Menken's *Notebooks*)."

City Streaming (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 25 minutes.

"This is a film made in Toronto, in memoriam, so to speak—a memory piece, a 'piecing together' of the experience of living there. The consciousness of the maker comes to sharply focussed visual music—not to arrive at snapshots, *somesuch*, but rather to 'sing' The City as re-membered from daily living...complementary, then, to an earlier film, *Unconscious London Strata*."

Babylon Series #3 (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes.

"There is an architected garden of the variably brash rock-solid liquid-encompassing, but always imitative, human mind as it processes the given light thoughtfully. This film is about that."

Visions in Meditation #2: Mesa Verde (1989); 16mm, color, silent, 16 minutes.

"This meditation takes its visual imperatives from the occasion of Mesa Verde, which I came to see finally as a Time rather than any such solidity as Place. 'There is a terror here,' were the first words which came to mind on seeing these ruins; and for two days after, during all my photography, I was haunted by some unknown occurrence which reverberated still in these rocks and rock-structures and environs. I can no longer believe that the Indians abandoned this solid habitation because of drought, lack-of-water, *somesuch* (these explanations do not, anyway, account for the fact that all memory of The Place, i.e. where it is, was eradicated from tribal memory, leaving only legend of a Time when such a place existed). Midst the rhythms, then, of editing I was compelled to introduce images which corroborate what the rocks said, and what the film strips seemed to say: the abandonment of Mesa Verde was an eventuality (rather than an event), was for All Time thus, and had been intrinsic from the first such human building."

Visions in Meditation #4: D.H. Lawrence (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 20 minutes.

"I've made three pilgrimages in my life: the 40-some-year home of Sigmund Freud in Vienna, Emily Dickinson's in Amherst, and the mountain ranch and crypt, would you call it? of D.H. Lawrence, outside Taos. I keep returning to the Lawrence environs again and again; and this last time attempted photography in that narrow little building where his ashes were (or were not) deposited (contradictory stories about that). There is a child-like sculpture of

The Phoenix at the far end of the room, a perfectly lovely emblem to deflate any pomposity people have added to Lawrence's 'I rise in flames....' The building is open, contains only a straw chair (remindful of the one Van Gogh painted) and a broom, which I always use with delight to sweep the dust and leaves from this simple abode. I have tried to make a film as true to the spirit of Lawrence as is this gentle chapel in homage of him. I have attempted to leave each image within the film free to be itself and only obliquely in the service of Lawrence's memory. I have wanted to make it a film within which that child-Phoenix can reasonably nest."

All quotations are by Stan Brakhage, from Canyon Cinema Catalog #6

VCR VIDEOS
A Cameraless Cacophony
Curated and presented by Scott Stark

Saturday, June 8, 1991

Tonight's program examines an art form that has only become possible in the past few years with the proliferation of home video recorders — the VCR video. Comparing this video derivation to its popular film counterpart, the "found footage" film [films that are made by reworking footage produced by others, usually commercially produced], some interesting difference emerge.

For example, the material used in the found footage *film* is *precious*; it is usually a one-of-a-kind item, rescued from a garbage can or stumbled upon at a flea market. Images found in VCR videos are decidedly *not* unique; in fact, they are accessible to anyone with a VCR. It could be said that the VCR has democratized the process of image appropriation: expansively produced images are now available, cheaply, to almost anyone. Also, found film footage is usually dated, reflecting the thought and culture of past decades; one approaches the footage with the perspective of history and, often, a sense of nostalgia. The videos, on the other hand, are *contemporary*, making use of images culled from our immediate culture; they have a disturbing power because they are so familiar.

Finally, since most of these videos were made without cameras, the image-gathering process is often subject to random nuances that are considered bad, ugly and unprofessional in broadcast TV. Interestingly, many of these glitches — ghosting, static, low resolution, etc. — are used in aesthetically challenging ways to undermine or redirect the intentions of the original imagery.

—Notes by Scott Stark

Tonight's program includes:

I Believe by Lise Swenson; 3.5 minutes.

The narrator's desires, beliefs and choices are determined by images from commercials.

Style War by Andrew MacDavid; 4 minutes.

Fashion and the Gulf war are given equal footing.

You Are The Museum by Museo Contempo; 10 minutes.

The viewer is designated the repository of TV Culture.

The Bloody Trail by Susan Dudune; 6 minutes.
Eye surgery, Charles Manson and lesbian rights.

Untitled by Nicole Cousino and Vincent Oresman; 5 minutes.
Subliminal messages and the seductiveness of excitement embodied in a car ad.

Doggie in the Saddle by J.G. Thompson; 3.5 minutes.
Dating games, beauty pageants and a dog lover.

Destiny by Valerie Soe; 6 minutes.
The prevalence of jingoism and the silencing of dissent in the United States during the conflict in the Gulf.

Harold-Karl by Mitchell Goodman; 5 minutes.
Reminiscences of the atomic bomb drop over Hiroshima, with images culled from Japanese TV.

Heterosexual White Noise by Fairies; 7 minutes.
An excerpt from a much longer work. "Heterosexual white noise means to refract an aggregate of responses still believed innate by the homophobic patriarchy as a collectively produced drone obliterating our own unwanted impulses." —Fairies.

Hear You by John Maés; 4 minutes.
A formal approach to image generation

America and Serial Killers by William Davenport; 6 minutes.
Cross-references between violence and racial prejudice.

A Kinder, Gentler Nation by Larry Kless; 2 minutes.
George Bush's infamous slogan is contrasted with video reality.

Clean Sweep by Eric Kotila; 2 minutes.
Burning books and censorship.

Showtime by Elizabeth Sher; 3.5 minutes.
A music video with images from a variety of sources.

Seduction by Rama; 3.5 minutes.
Notions of marginalized sexuality and mediated desire.

Untitled by Rebecca Maya Parker; 4 minutes.
Cleanliness, beauty, food, and mom.

Light Sweet Crude by Lee Leveque and Diane Nerwen; 7 minutes.
A dialectic approach to the Gulf war and the media.

Das Luv Boat by 99 Hooker; 17 minutes.
The subtext of a popular TV show is made explicit.

TOUKI BOUKI
by Djibril Diop Mambety

Sunday, June 9, 1991

Touki Bouki (*The Hyena's Voyage*) (1973), directed and written by Djibril Diop Mambety, starring Magaye Niang & Mareme Niang; 16mm, color, sound, 95 minutes.

Dakar, Ouagadougou, Bamako, and, of course, Timbuktu, are cities which have floated barely anchored in the sea that is my imagination. For most of us, they exist as references to the ever so far away, the epitome of remote. Their "there" is as incomprehensible as a metropolis on the moon.

Two years ago, I attended the Robert Flaherty film conference in upstate New York. Time after time during that week-long meeting, I heard reference to a city called Ouagadougou in a country called Burkina Faso, where a spectacular film festival took place every two years. More community oriented than the commercial market place so typical of large European or American film festivals, Ouagadougou (the Pan African Film Festival) was intended to be an immersion in African cinema, art and culture — a rare mixing of theater and life.

Last February, I was able to go to Ouagadougou, and it was there that I initially heard a passionate account of the film *Touki Bouki*. The film attained a kind of mythic stature for me through a series of chance conversations I had with African filmmakers and African-American scholars that week. I will never forget the passion with which one Senegalese woman screenwriter spoke of this film over breakfast one morning. She aspired to write a story just as simple, supported by an equally complex fabric of visual and aural riddles and allusions. Now, after thousands of miles and a few months, I have been able to see this film which in many ways was the crux of some of my most memorable cinema discussions while in Africa. *Touki Bouki* represents different things to different people: an autobiographical piece on the transformation from youth to maturity; a picaresque dance through modern Senegal; a narrative full of ellipses, patched together by the glue of clever editing and cinematography. This quintessential New Wave tribute to the history of cinema — replete with visual quotations from spaghetti westerns and the Brazilian Cinema Novo — also includes more specific allusions to the films of Jean Luc Godard, George Franju and Jean Rouch. Director Djibril Diop Mambety's collage of strangely familiar styles and motifs provides the Western cinema lover with a grip on a film that is immersed in African folklore and ritual.

Mambety's camera chases Mory and Anta through the streets of Dakar as they madly try to find enough money to get themselves to Paris — to Western cool, hippie bohemia, as far away as possible from family and tradition. But, through the lilting and ever present songs of Josephine Baker, Paris is never far away. Already in 1973, Mambety is creating a cinematic language through which he is able to comment on the pervasiveness, and, yes, the seductiveness of Western culture, especially for the young people of a less industrialized society. Mambety's view of the "new Africa", full of machines, cars and mechanized animal slaughter, is both intrigued and apprehensive. At one point, the delicate sounds of metal in a factory slowly expand to a synthesized roar.

Both the film and its characters are on a voyage to a mythic land, to a modern, "foreign" way of being that may very well force them to abandon all faith. If Paris is the answer to their prayers, then heaven is a place where visitors must come without baggage.

—Notes by Lynne Sachs

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by *Roberto Rossellini*

Parts I-V: Thursday, June 13, 1991

Parts VI-X: Sunday, June 16, 1991

Acts of the Apostles (1969), by Roberto Rossellini; 16mm, color, sound, 270 minutes.

Throughout a career which spanned 35 years, Roberto Rossellini directed over 30 films for both the cinema and television. His first projects were produced in Italy during and after World War II and were focused on people's wartime experiences and their struggle against fascism. One of the founders of a style which became known as neorealism, Rossellini's early films such as *Open City* and *Paisan* became archetypes of neorealism. As his work continued, Rossellini explored other modes of filmmaking through his relationship with actress Ingrid Bergman, to whom he was married during the 1950s and later, after their divorce in 1957, through making a series of films during his "commercial" period. In the course of this time, the director's work began to undergo a kind of metamorphosis from the conventions of neorealism and narrative filmmaking, to a didactic and epic style of historically-based work which would typify the director's later films.

It is at this point that *Acts of the Apostles* was produced. Rossellini had given up making commercial theatrical films in the mid-1960s and began to utilize the film medium in a more educational and informational manner. The focus which evolved through the process of making these projects, which were all historically-based, "settled definitively on the format of the 'great man' who is examined as representative of his age...in which...some profound change occurred in the history of human consciousness." The didactic qualities of the film emerge in a Brechtian tendency of which it has been said that, "Rossellini, like Brecht, wants us to think about what we are seeing and because the main action of the film...so clearly parallels the director's own *mise en scene*."

Acts of the Apostles, based on Saint Luke's portion of the Bible by the same name, was filmed in Tunisia and was originally produced for Italian television in 1969. The series originally consisted of five episodes which ran over an hour each. The English-dubbed version presented here was released for educational use and is somewhat shorter than the original, at 270 minutes running time. Also, the English version consisted of ten parts of approximately 25 minutes each.

As an indication of how far Rossellini had shifted in style and focus from his earlier films, he says about *Acts of the Apostles*, "I think the arrival of Christianity was an important turning point changing man's relationship to nature and thereby putting him in a position to act." It is interesting to note as well that in contrast to the early Christian era, Rossellini sees the beginnings of what is yet to culminate in the current age when he added in the same interview that, "Even more than being in harmony with nature, man must be conscious of it, and also dominate it."

As far as plot and content of *Acts of the Apostles* are concerned, clearly the emphasis is more on the historical than on the religious, as reflected by the omission from the film of divine events such as the Ascension of Christ and many of the miracles which the Apostles performed in their attempts to demonstrate proof of Christ's power. It also seems important to mention that the frequent use of the zoom in this film is important not only because it adds a fluid sense of space to the work, but also because it suggests an extension and contraction of the dramatic space which could be interpreted to allude to the spiritual context of the film. This only further confirms Rossellini's attempt to downplay the spectacle in favor of emphasizing the historical significance in Luke's story.

—Notes by Jerome Carolfi

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS
Program I

Thursday, October 3, 1991

"(Some things)...are not to be seen in a brilliant light, to be taken in a single glance, they should be left in the dark, a part here and a part there picked up by a faint light. Their florid patterns recede into the darkness, conjuring in their stead an inexpressible aura of depth and mystery, of overtones but partly suggested... Ultimately it is the magic of shadows..."

—Jun'ichiro Tanizaki

* * *

Tonight's program is the first of two which celebrate the centennial of cinema (1891-1896).

Opening the Nineteenth Century : 1896 (1991), by the Lumière Brothers and Ken Jacobs; 16mm, b&w, 3D, silent.

Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse (1991), by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 8 minutes.

The primary "molten horror" is T.V., though there are other horrors metaphored in the film. Four superimposed rolls of hand-painted imagery are edited so as to approximate the hypnogagic process, whereby the optic nerves resist grotesque infusions of luminescent light. (S.B.)

Notes in Origin (1987), by Ellie Epp; 16mm, color, silent, 15 minutes.

Shot in the filmmaker's native northern Alberta, *Notes in Origin* is organized around numbered long-take shots and with purity and elegance, intimates a mysteriously shared and personal complicity between artist and viewer. "What I like about the film is precision, slightness, economy of means, delight, inference and a kind of motion that can be followed but not tagged and makes seeing intelligent." (E.E.)

Out in the Garden (1991), by Vincent Grenier; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

A film about the dynamic of assumptions as seen through the struggle of a gay man who has recently been told that he is HIV positive and who, in his own way, tries to come to terms with the news. The film eschews the usual talking head and focuses on something different: the peculiar occasion for examining anew as brought on by disconnectedness. In the process, questions of identity, one's sense of reality, the day-to-day tyrannies, end up implicating the viewer intimately as well.

Nocturne (1980, revised 1989), by Phil Solomon; 16mm, b&w, silent, 10 minutes.

"Finding similarities in the pulses and shapes between World War II night bombing footage, lightning flashes and my own experiments in 'open shuddering', I induced the War at Home." (P.S.)

17 Reasons Why (1985-87), by Nathaniel Dorsky; 16mm, color, silent, projected at 18 fps, 20 minutes.

"*17 Reasons Why* was photographed with a variety of semi-ancient regular-8 cameras and is projected unsplit as 16mm. These pocket-sized relics enabled me to walk around virtually 'unseen', exploring and improvising with the immediacy of a more spontaneous medium. The four-image format has built-in contrapuntal resonances, ironies and beauty, and in each case gives us an unpretentious look at the film frame itself... the simple and primordial delight of luminous Kodachrome and rich black and white chugging through these time-worn gates." (N.D.)

—Notes by Jerome Carolfi

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS
Program II

Sunday, October 6, 1991

Tonight's program is the second of two which celebrate the centennial of cinema (1891-1896)

Fragment (1985), by Ellen Gaine; Super-8mm, b&w, silent, 13 minutes.

Fragment mediates exquisitely on different levels, reflections and shapes around a body of water... a study about the interplay of the four classic humours—fire, earth, water and air.

Orchard Street (1955-56), by Ken Jacobs; 16mm, color, silent, original Kodachrome workprint, 15 minutes.

Nightcats (restored print) (1956), by Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 8 minutes.

"A bold attempt, full of visual sensibility, to use living animals, unconscious of their roles, as abstract counters in a tone poem of color and chiaroscuro." (Parker Tyler)

Winter Days (1991), by Peter Herwitz; 16mm (blow-up from Super-8mm), color, silent projected at 18 fps, 8 minutes.

"Although the film is not terribly long, it conveys a sense of long passages of time spent indoors against the backdrop of winter days. There is a sense of narrative continuity and even *mise en scene* space developed through relatively long takes and layerings. Structured in five parts, each takes a time of day and appropriate state of mind as its theme—twilight, morning snow, etc." (P.H.)

Dead End, Dead End (1981), by Daniel Barnett; 16mm, color, original Kodachrome workprint, silent, 25 minutes.

Time Being (1991), by Gunvor Nelson; 16mm, silent, b&w, 8 minutes.

This extraordinary film manages to craft a delicate portrait of her mother through time and refracted light while unfolding in purple silence the relationship of Nelson to her mother as well.

—Notes by Jerome Carolfi

ANNE ROBERTSON'S SUPER 8 DIARIES

Thursday, October 10, 1991

I believe in film being necessary every day. —Anne Robertson

Five Year Diary (excerpts) (ongoing, begun in 1981); Super-8mm, b&w/color, sound on film and cassette, approximately 240 minutes.

Anne Robertson's ongoing Super-8mm *Diary* could initially be viewed as 34 hours of neurosis-on-film, but on a closer look, her years of obsessive and deeply personal filmmaking reveal a great tension: tension between Robertson's intimate life-stories and our role as spectators—paying guests to an epic of introspection. It's a

tension we feel, the hurling together of a public sphere (us, here, SFAI, the movies) and the private one (obsessive thoughts of suicide, "the internal argument externalized"). They show a life alone, one which can only be revealed and nurtured by the audience, seated in dark rows of plastic chairs. Robertson bills these films "self-therapy. So far every subject I come up with—excess apologies, thoughts about suicide...—every subject has been affected by being included in a film." (A.R.)

For someone who makes "therapy films" alone, many designed for her own mental needs, Anne Robertson's films certainly reverberate as commentary on a woman's experience in an era loaded with social pressures. Two excerpts from the *Diary*, *Rotting Pumpkin* and *Fruit*, openly examine the socialized anxiety women feel at aging, gaining weight, and losing skin the texture of ripe fruit.

Robertson's films not only draw us inwards, into her own tangled experience as a manic-depressive trying to cope with her illness, they ripple outwards, each ripple touching our bodies and neuroses and making us acutely aware of our awkward roles as spectator/confidantes in Robertson's revelations.

— Notes by Jenny Perlin

THE 8mm FILMS OF TAKAHIKO IIMURA
Filmmaker Takahiko Iimura in person

Saturday, October 12, 1991

Taka Iimura has been making films since the early 1960s. A pioneering figure in the New York and Japanese Film Underground, Iimura's work has had an inestimable impact upon the development of experimental cinema in both the U.S. and Japan. His work has moved through a series of clear, consistent developments: from 1962 to 1968, Iimura was largely involved with surreal imagery, with eroticism, and with social criticism; from 1968 through 1971, he continued to work with photographic imagery, but used it in increasingly formal ways; from 1972 through 1978, he devoted himself to a series of minimalist explorations of time and space. Recently, Iimura has been involved more with video than film, though he occasionally produces new films. With the exception of *Ai (Love)* and *Talking Picture (The Structure of Film Viewing)*, the films on this evening's program have rarely been seen, a number of them being presented for the first time in the United States.

Junk (1962); Reg. 8mm, b&w, sound on cassette, 10 minutes at 18fps.

Music by Takehisa Kosugi. A film poem of junks on Tokyo Bay in which "...surreal imagery is used effectively to dramatize the slow ecological destruction brought about by a wasteful industrialized society." (Scott MacDonald)

Taka and Ako (1962); Reg. 8mm, b&w, silent, 8 minutes at 18fps.

Images taken from the photo albums of Taka and Akiko Iimura merge in double exposure to commemorate the occasion of their marriage.

Dada 62 (1962); 16mm (blow up from Reg. 8mm), b&w, silent, 10 minutes at 18fps.

Dadaistic document of Yomiuri Independents exhibition, a memorable art show documenting Japanese Neo-Dada.

Ai (Love) (1962); 16mm (blow up from Reg. 8mm), b&w, sound, 10 minutes.

Sound by Yoko Ono.

Close-ups of a male and female body during lovemaking are photographed in such a way that we are frequently unsure which particular portion of which body we are seeing. These close-ups are juxtaposed with long shots in slightly fast motion of the bodies entwined or rubbing against one another. The film emphasizes the essential biological nature of the human organism. In a more formal sense, too, *Love* is interesting, because of the dramatic black and white contrasts in the imagery, created in part by shooting in 8mm and then blowing the film up to 16mm, and because of Yoko Ono's soundtrack, which combines a 'shhhhhhh' reminiscent of white noise with a variety of other intermittent sounds (to make the soundtrack, Ono hung a microphone out the window).

—Scott MacDonald

Anma (The Masseurs) (1963); 16mm (blow up from Reg. 8mm), b&w, silent, 13 minutes.

A document of Butoh dance by Tatsumi Hijikata (the originator of Butoh) with Kazuo Ohno. A cine-dance, not merely an objective document of a dance but a film in which the camera (and cameraperson) actually participates in the action on stage.

Rose Color Dance (1965); 16mm (blow up from Reg. 8mm), b&w, silent, 13 minutes.

Another cine-dance of Hijikata Butoh dance with Kazuo Ohno restructuring the material for the film.

I Saw the Shadow (1966); Reg. 8mm, b&w, silent, 12 minutes at 18fps.

Talking Picture (The Structure of Film Viewing) (1981); Super-8mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Playing the double role of the filmmaker and the film viewer at the same time, the artist sits with his back to the audience and faces an empty screen. The film discusses the structure of film viewing and the role of the film audience.

Film notes provided by the artist except where noted.

Other materials taken from *Takahiko Jimura: Film and Video*, published by Anthology Film Archives, N.Y., 1990.

—Albert Kilchesty

TITICUT FOLLIES
by Frederick Wiseman

Sunday, October 13, 1991

Titicut Follies (1967); 16mm, b&w, sound, 87 minutes. Produced, directed and edited by Frederick Wiseman. Photographed by John Marshall.

On July 29th of this year, a Justice of the Superior Court of Massachusetts ruled that Frederick Wiseman's film *Titicut Follies*, banned from worldwide public exhibition by the Massachusetts courts since 1967, may now be shown to the public. Until this historic ruling, Wiseman's film had been the only film made in the U.S. to be banned for reasons other than obscenity. Although available in slightly different form to researchers, mental health professionals and students, and film scholars since the late 60s, the wider banning of *Titicut Follies* made it a *cause célèbre* for almost twenty-five years. A very brief overview of *Titicut Follies'* tumultuous history.

Tempest in a Snakepit

"For a month in the spring of 1966, Frederick Wiseman, a slight 37-year-old lawyer-turned-filmmaker, prowled with his camera the stark corridors of Bridgewater State Hospital, a warren for the criminally insane in

Massachusetts. The result was *'The Titicut Follies.'* a compassionate look at sick men classified like casebook abstracts by their psychiatrists and treated like cattle. A great critical success at the New York Film Festival this fall, the film has aroused outrage in Massachusetts—not against Bridgewater but Wiseman.” (*Newsweek*, December 4, 1967)

* * * *

The Frightful Follies of Bedlam

“[*Titicut Follies*] has been regarded as an exposé by critics, the public and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which, after letting Producer-Director Frederick Wiseman in with his camera, has been seeking in sundry ways to prevent him from showing what he shot. And an exposé it surely is. Wiseman assures us that the issues it raises extend beyond the boundaries of the Bay State, that indeed Bridgewater is a rather decent place, compared to similar snakepits elsewhere.

“If so, we can be glad he limited himself to this one. The Bridgewater atmosphere is one of aimless hopelessness punctuated by outbursts of unthinking, almost ritualized violence. A psychiatrist turns an interview with an inmate into a sadistic baiting, or, with malicious cheerfulness, force-feeds a dying old man, while we wonder whether the ash from the doctor’s carelessly dangling cigarette is really going to fall into the glop being funnelled into the convulsively shuddering throat.” (Richard Schickel in *Life*, December 1, 1967)

* * * *

Stripped Bare at the Follies

“After a showing of *Titicut Follies* the mind does not dwell on the hospital’s ancient and even laughable physical plant, or its pitiable social atmosphere. What sticks, what really hurts is the sight of human life made cheap and betrayed. We see men needlessly stripped bare, insulted, herded about callously, mocked, taunted. We see them ignored or locked interminably in cells. We hear the craziness in the air, the sudden outbursts, the quieter but stronger undertow of irrational noise that any doctor who has worked under such circumstances can only take for so long. But much more significantly, we see the ‘professionals,’ the doctors and workers who hold the fort in the Bridgewater of this nation, and they are all over...In sum, we see ourselves. Even the most callous and cynical politician has a right to become uneasy and fearful when he sees the most respected, educated and ‘rational’ members of *his* world, his middle-class, professional world, behave as they do in this film.” (Robert Coles in *The New Republic*, January 20, 1968)

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“Our proceedings against the film were not motivated by any desire to cover up conditions at Bridgewater. On the contrary, I initially endorsed Wiseman’s project...(I was lieutenant governor at the time) because I believed a thoughtful, sensitive, and fair presentation of conditions at Bridgewater would be helpful in getting support to improve those conditions, and because I did not then have any reason to doubt that Wiseman would observe the rights of the inmates and patients. The state officials in charge were, from the outset, quite rightly concerned about the privacy of the inmates. [They] were wards of the state, and the state had a responsibility to protect them.

“The efforts of the state to prevent the showing of the film were not motivated by a fear of adverse effect on the reputation of state officials. As the complaint in the case shows,...the state’s primary concern was for the privacy of the inmates. The case was fully litigated through the Massachusetts courts, and these agreed that the film constituted a massive invasion of privacy...”

(Elliot Richardson, in *The Civil Liberties Review*, Winter/Spring 1974)

* * * *

“...I have seen no evidence of harm to any individual as a result of the film being exhibited...The time has now come for a complete lifting of this court’s original order...However, the names and addresses of those individuals shown in the film shall continue to be kept strictly confidential.” (Andrew Gill Meyer, Justice of the Superior Court of the State of Massachusetts, July 29, 1991)

* * * *

“In the twenty years since Wiseman made *Titicut Follies*, a new facility has been built at Bridgewater, but conditions seem to have changed little. In spring 1987, the national press reported the deaths of five inmates. Three

of the five deaths were suicides and were found to have been preventable. They occurred in seclusion cells where inmates are supposed to be constantly monitored by guards; the men were able to kill themselves because they were left unobserved." (*Sight and Sound*, Spring 1988)

* * * *

"*Titicut Follies* was an important film...a very interesting concept of what the cinéma vérité camera does, the wide framing within which lots of action occurs rather than the camera searching out as you find more in *Don't Look Back* and Pennebaker's camera. Somehow it was a horror film and it was a documentary horror film, and it was happening in Massachusetts, home of the Puritans, home of the Cradle of Liberty. The film falls in the muckraking tradition...It's a shock film, and it's not the kind of film where the shock is just for the shock itself. It tells us about how people can relate and how people can be. That's very valuable." (filmmaker Ed Pincus in G. Roy Levin's *Documentary Explorations*, Doubleday, NY: 1971)

* * * *

G.Roy Levin: "Do you see yourself as a cinéma vérité filmmaker?"

Wiseman: "I have no idea what that means. I think it's a pompous, overly worked, bullshit phrase." (*Documentary Explorations*, p.318)

Frederick Wiseman was born in 1930 in Boston and was graduated from Yale Law School in 1954. His first foray into the world of film was as producer of Shirley Clarke's 1964 film, *The Cool World*. His subsequent documentaries all consistently confront society's bedrock institutions. Beginning in 1967 with *Titicut Follies*, Wiseman has completed twenty-three of these institutional portraits, mostly for public television. "He has made films about hospitals, schools, military installations, and research institutes; a big city police force and a juvenile court; a department store, a monastery, a racetrack, a modeling agency. From *Titicut* on, he has proved indifferent both to journalistic convention and audience convenience, working in an austere, provocatively reticent style. There are no titles, narration, music, or explicit commentary of any kind. He never announces his themes; instead, he plunges the unguided and sometimes baffled viewer into the life of an institution, imposing his own dramatic form on the many fragments of behavior he has photographed. In the films, institutional staff and their 'clients' are caught in routine moments as well as in situations of extreme stress or even anguish. Through selection and juxtaposition of these little scenes, Wiseman puts together a complex portrait of the institution, a portrait that has the suspense not of narrative but of a sustained, detailed argument about values and experience." (David Denby, *The New York Review*, Nov.8, 1990)

Frederick Wiseman partial filmography:

As producer: *The Cool World* (1964), directed by Shirley Clarke

As director: *Titicut Follies* (1967)
High School (1968)
Law and Order (1969)
Hospital (1970)
Basic Training (1971)
Essene (1972)
Primate (1974)
Welfare (1975)
Meat (1976)
Canal Zone (1977)
Model (1980)
The Store (1983)
Blind (1986)

Deaf (1986)
Work (1986)
Multi-Handicapped (1986)
Near Death (1989)
Central Park (1990)

—Notes by Albert Kilchesty

BETWEEN ABSORPTION AND SUGGESTION:
Films by Mark Vorpahl, Robert Fox and Joseph Cornell
Filmmakers Vorpahl and Fox in person

Thursday, October 17, 1991

"Off hand, I can think of no good reason as to why I've devoted so much of my life's energies to the seemingly powerless practice of creating rarified duets of time and light....And why have I chosen the supposedly dying medium of Super-8 film and the soon to be buried one of Regular 8? Am I merely trying to get a jump on the experimental film tradition's slide toward irrelevance? To that question I'd answer, half-seriously, that there are many specific qualities to these mediums that justify continued artistic exploration. The qualities of image, grain, and dirt magnification they present; the tones they exhibit; the types of filming their cameras encourage; the portability and intimacy of their projectors...I could go on *ad infinitum*....But a large part of my motivation is sheer contrariness, a contrariness directed against those high priests of narrow-mindedness who interpret market forces according to their own convenience and profitability rather than culture's benefit. Granted, my gesture here is puny, but I stand by the general principle that it is always better to ride a losing horse when the finish line is a cliff". (Mark Vorpahl).

Retreating Shards (1988), by Mark Vorpahl; Regular 8mm, silent, 3.5 minutes.

When the present is saturated with one's awareness of its passing, familiar textures, shadows and movements drift from their concreteness. Truly a home movie. All editing done in camera.

Rash (1990), by Mark Vorpahl; Super-8mm, silent, 3.5 minutes.

Between anticipation and the act. How is it that we know something will drop when let go of? How is it we can speak without knowing what we're going to say?

Bound To (1989), by Mark Vorpahl; Regular 8mm/Super-8mm, sound-on-cassette, 14 minutes.

The world that lives in us is the world we live in reflected in the peculiarities of individual desire and history. When conflicts arise between the contours of the image and what there is to be captured, a feeling of invasion is experienced...? Action is demanded but not inevitable. (Notes by the filmmaker).

* * *

Gnir Rednow (1955-6?), by Joseph Cornell and Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 5 minutes.

Joseph Cornell's "mirrored" version of Stan Brakhage's film, *The Wonder Ring*.

Mulberry Street (c.1957), by Joseph Cornell; 16mm, b&w, silent, 9 minutes.

Photographed by Rudy Burckhardt, edited by Larry Jordan.

Centuries of June (1955-6?), by Joseph Cornell and Stan Brakhage; 16mm, color, silent, 10 minutes.

"This film comes to exist because Joseph Cornell wished, one fine summer day, to show me the old homes of his beloved Flushing. One of them had been torn down, and another beside it was scheduled for demolition. In torment (similar to that which had prompted him to ask me to photograph the Third Avenue Elevated before it was destroyed [*The Wonder Ring*]) he suggested we spend the afternoon together preserving 'the world of this house,' its environs. It would be too strong a word to say he 'directed' my photography; and yet his presence and constant suggestions (often simply a lift of the hand, or lifted eyebrows, even) made this film entirely his." (Stan Brakhage).

* * *

Beginner's Mind (1991), by Robert Fox; 16mm, color, silent at 18fps, 25 minutes.

Described by the filmmaker as addressing "the struggle for creativity between the spontaneity of childhood and the passion of the adult," *Beginner's Mind* meditates upon the individual's need to achieve balance in the fundamental conflict between the vision of the child and the perspective of the adult. The experience of seeing the film is analogous to the way the eye might move over the surface of a painting in a given amount of time. And in the course of viewing the film, a subtle sense emerges that what is being presented is not a series of fixed meanings. Instead of setting up visual contrasts for predetermined emphases, the film encourages the viewer to consider oppositions as components of the same dynamic.

The film's journey moves through a kind of wilderness or wild country of introspection. However, owing to the intimate feel of the film, one may get the impression that this is familiar territory for the filmmaker. The film contains a strong sense of movement through this territory, but it is not movement from one physical place to another but rather a lyricism of camera movement through an introspective emotional space. The integration of landscapes into the film discourages thinking of it as pedestrian vacation footage, even though some segments suggest an away-from-home quality. Images of the terrain in Northern Arizona function like interior signposts and symbols denoting scenery. Loosely structured superimpositions, which frequently combine images from the natural and man-made worlds, infuse the form of the film in such a way that by being less structured, the film gains its power.

The way the superimposition is used in *Beginner's Mind* suggests an influence of collage techniques which can be seen in the complex, yet open-ended, surface values in the film. The relationships among the motifs in the film—nature, the human body, signs of human life—resonate in an atonal chorus throughout the work. Sometimes these relationships seem clear and direct and other times they seem diffuse and unclear. Things which feel like "mistakes," such as a passage of black leader or a flash frame, have sometimes been intentionally inserted into the work, mirroring the way such things also occur in life. Often it is not until long after an uncomprehended event that its significance is understood.

As the title suggests, the beginner's mind is one without any presuppositions. It is a mindset which seeks to apprehend the perceived world with a minimum of presuppositions. It also implies that one is learning something, and the best way to learn something is from the beginning.

—Notes by Jerome Carolfi

Robert Fox Filmography

Five (1978); 16mm, 10 minutes.

Untitled (1979); Super-8mm, 7 minutes.

Score (1984); 16mm, 6 minutes.

The Rose Arbor Inn (1985); 16mm, 2.5 minutes.

Tu'm' (1986); 16mm, 10 minutes.

Medical Research Special Report (1988); 16mm, 29 minutes.

Latency (1990); 16mm, 6.5 minutes.

Beginner's Mind (1991) 16mm, 25 minutes.

Mark Vorpahl Filmography:

Wait (1988)

Reflecting Shards (1988)

Crashing (1989)

Untitled (1989)

Rash (1990)

Bound To (1991)

54 (1991)

DESTINY IS EYELASH CLOSE

By Portia Cobb

Saturday, October 19, 1991

Destiny is Eyelash Close (1991); a two-channel video installation coupled with performance.

In 1989 I was struck by a number of news related events taking place across the country which consistently portrayed young Black males as relentless criminals, dope dealers, gang-bangers, rapists, murderers, or as unproductive menaces to society. These images were in sharp contrast to images of Blacks which have endeared them to the American viewer—that of the comedian or the entertainer. *Species: In.danger.ed* (1989) [a previous videotape by Cobb] was an attempt to question and put into another context the topic of declaring young Black men as an endangered species. Could negative and unsympathetic portrayals lead to a further unconscious destruction by planting seeds of low self-esteem in the psyche of the innocent...of children who reference the electronic media as a way of learning? It also explored whether specific notions of marginalization are consciously placed to keep young Black men marginalized, controlled, and at bay.

Destiny is Eyelash Close is a continuation of an idea that what we see, what we witness in the media either empowers us or debilitates us. Reconstructed news segments, visuals and provoking images are presented in contrast to actual vérité conversations with young Black men about negative portrayals which have been perpetuated by negative media representation. A performance will follow which will allow and facilitate active participation by audience members as a measure not to instill or evoke guilt, but to empower themselves as spectators with the tools to immediately revise their everyday media intake and perceptions.

—Portia Cobb

Oakland-based media artist Portia Cobb has curated film and video programs for the Pacific Film Archive, S.F. Camerawork, the Oakland Public Library and the Cinematheque. She has lectured on Black media at the University of California, Berkeley and at the San Francisco Art Institute.

Her previous videotapes include *Where Are You? An Oakland Story* (1990) and *Species: In.danger.ed* (1989). *Destiny is Eyelash Close* is an in-progress, evolving work.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE DAY:**Presentation by Robert Wilson****Co-sponsored by the SF Art Institute and the SF Museum of Modern Art****Sunday, October 20, 1991**

Trained in film, dance, architecture, drama, and painting, Robert Wilson has used these tools to forge a completely new brand of visual theater. His many contributions include *Deafman Glance* and *Einstein on the Beach*, a widely acclaimed opera.

SHOOT FOR THE CONTENTS**By Trinh T. Minh-ha****Co-sponsored by Film Arts Foundation****Wednesday, October 23, 1991**

It is difficult to write in a straight line about Trinh T. Minh-ha or her work. Notes, or thought lines, take on a three dimensional quality with lines and arrows jumping about, attempting to catch some of the many connections and references. If one tries to elicit a simple answer to a simple question, Trinh makes it clear that there are no simple questions or answers. Instead, she invites us to challenge ourselves and to enjoy an intellectual and aesthetic dance among life's complexities, opening up to yet more questions.

Much like her work and her version of life, Trinh T. Minh-ha is hard to pin down and categorize. Born in Vietnam, Trinh continued her studies in the United States and France. She taught music composition at the National Conservatory of Music in Dakar, Senegal for 3 years and has traveled and lectured extensively on many areas of study, including film, feminism and art. She is presently teaching as the Chancellor's Distinguished Professor in Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and is Associate Professor of Cinema at San Francisco State University. This year Trinh gives us not only the release of her fourth film, *Shoot For The Contents*, but also the publication of her fifth book, *When the Moon Waxes Red*, a collection of her essays written in the last ten years on film, gender and cultural politics. Previous books are: *En miniscules* (poems, 1987), *Un Art sans oeuvre* (on contemporary arts, 1981), *African Spaces - Designs for Living in Upper Volta*, in collaboration with Jean-Paul Bourdier (on African rural architecture, 1985), and *Woman, Native, Other* (on post-coloniality and feminism, 1989).

The recipient of several awards and grants (including an American Film Institute Maya Deren award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, two NEA Media Arts Awards, two Rockefeller Intercultural Film Fellowships and a Humanities Fellowship at Cornell University), Trinh's films have shown widely in the States, as well as in London, Rome, Florence, Jerusalem, Canada, Senegal, Hong Kong, Japan, and France. Her anti-ethnographic *Reassemblage* (Senegal 1982), was widely exhibited abroad and in the U.S., including The New York Film Festival (1983), and it has toured the country with the Asian American Film Festival among other festivals. *Naked Spaces - Living is Round* (West Africa, 1985), a study in vernacular architecture, has received the Blue Ribbon Award for Best Experimental Feature at the American International Film Festival and the Golden Athena Award for Best Feature Documentary at the Athens International Film Festival in 1986; it showed at the 1987 Biennial of the Whitney Museum of American Art, and has been touring the States as well as Europe through the American Federation of Arts. *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* has received the Merit Award from the Bombay International Film Festival,

the Film as Art Award from the Society for the Encouragement of Contemporary Art (SF Museum of Modern Art) and the Blue Ribbon Award at the American Film and Video Festival. She has just completed *Shoot For The Contents* (1991), a feature-length film on culture, arts and politics in China.

“Critical work requires a difficult mode of attention: one sees and listens to it happening; one plays (with) it as one experiences it in/as an activity of production. One does not really catch it, nor does one speak *about* it without contingent detours and demanding patience.”

—*When the Moon Waxes Red*

Shoot For The Contents (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 102 minutes.

“Any look at China is bound to be loaded with questions. Her visible faces are miniscule compared to her unknown ones—or is this true?” A woman’s voice-over relates this to us at the opening of *Shoot For The Contents*, establishing a tone quite apart from the conventional documentary’s male authoritarian voice-over simplifying and explaining away any complexities or confusions, pretending certainty. The film’s title itself, a play on a Chinese guessing game, confesses—no, proudly proclaims—the lack of a conclusive grasp. This initial form sets us up for Trinh’s exploration of power and change, with her re-examination of many elements of the maze, including tradition and the process of naming.

Where we found water in her earlier work, here we find mountains and the allegory of the dragon, expressing power. Although it is no *one* animal, but a composite and cannot be caught, the dragon, whether called the dragon by the ruling classes or the python by the ordinary people, weaves the dominant threads of this film. It carries us through politics and filmmaking, Mao and Confucius, words and actions, male and female, calligraphy and dancers, sun (son) and moon, right and wrong, right and left. These apparent dualities are not left in simple opposition, however. “Rather, what is involved is a state of alert in-betweenness and ‘critical’ non-knowingness, in which the bringing of reflective and cosmic memory to *life* —that is, to *the formlessness of form* — is infinitely more exigent than the attempt to ‘express,’ to judge, or evaluate.” (from *When the Moon Waxes Red*)

This film, like the dragon, “infinitely in metamorphosis, dives deep, rises high, meanders, coils, leaps and takes its flight.”

“To face reality squarely and sensitively, without positive or negative escapism, is to see ‘the small in the large and the large in the small; the real in the illusory and the illusory in the real’ (Shen-Fu) . . . The freedom implied in the internal and external projection of these ‘landscapes of life’ on canvas, on celluloid, or on screen, lies in the availability of mind — and heart — that declines to limit one’s perception of things and events to their actual forms. Such freedom also allows for the fearless assumption of the hyphen — the fluid interplay of realistic and non-realistic modes of representation, or to quote a Chinese opera expert, of ‘bold omissions and minute depictions.’”

(from *When the Moon Waxes Red*)

—Notes by Susanne Fairfax

TRINH T. MINH-HA: A RETROSPECTIVE
Naked Spaces: Living is Round

Thursday, October 24, 1991

Naked Spaces: Living is Round (1985); 16mm, color, sound, 135 minutes.

Spaces: interstices. Silence. What it is not. *Naked Spaces: Living is Round* is not strident, not didactic, not

narrative, not linear, not “telling the truth.” *Naked Spaces* is Trinh T. Minh-ha’s version of a text, of a documentary. It is a scathing critique of traditional ethnographic filmmaking. It is a lyrical, beautiful, engrossing and provocative film.

“A film is like a piece of paper which I offer the viewer. I am responsible for what is within the boundary of the paper but I do not control and do not wish to control its folding. The viewer can fold it horizontally, obliquely, vertically, they can weave the elements to their liking and background. This interfolding and interweaving is what I consider to be most exciting in making films.” (T.T.M.)

It is shot in West Africa. It is Trinh’s second film, completed in 1985.

Start folding your paper.

Trinh T. Minh-ha was born in Vietnam and has lived in France, Senegal and the United States. She is a filmmaker, writer and composer. Presently, she is teaching as the Chancellor’s Distinguished Professor in Women’s Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and as Associate Professor of Cinema at San Francisco State University. Her most recent book is *When The Moon Waxes Red* (Routledge, 1991), on film, gender, and cultural politics.

—Notes by Jenny Perlin.

TRINH T. MINH-HA: A RETROSPECTIVE
Reassemblage and Surname Viet Given Name Nam
Artist in person

Saturday, October 26, 1991

Reassemblage (1982); 16mm, color, sound, 40 minutes.

Fragments of cinematic tradition: a tracking shot that cuts off, a camera that moves, flickers, and turns back on itself like the eye does—this is *Reassemblage*, not just a glimpse into Senegal, but a glimpse into the way we watch, how our gaze is coded and shrouded in layers of culture. Our eye does not pan smoothly across the surface of an African landscape, nor does it gaze gently in soft focus upon a mother and child under a tree. If we were watching there, our eyes would flit and stop, turn back and refocus. Our minds would connect disconnected pieces of our voyage, bits of poetry would resurface; we would be aware of our simultaneous presence and non-presence in the landscape and of our non-place in the foreign culture. A “traditional documentary” seeks to explain, to define, and to categorize the “curious,” the “savage,” the “ethnic” from the start. Explanations of on-screen activities, “expert testimony” and clichéd cinematic technique tend to lull the audience into a feeling that what they are watching and hearing is the truth about a faraway and exotic ‘tribe.’ Trinh’s *Reassemblage* begins with the comment, “I do not want to speak about; just speak nearby.” She does not presume that just by rejecting the standard ethnographic film technique that she will gain entry into the culture. She remains a woman with a movie camera, a woman with a selective eye and a critical vision.

Surname Viet Given Name Nam (1989); 16mm, color, sound, 108 minutes.

Surname Viet Given Name Nam is like the magician’s trick of pulling off the tablecloth while leaving the dishes and crystal on it undisturbed. The film yanks the authority of the interview—the ultimate truth-telling device—out from under the film, yet leaves the stories of Vietnamese women’s strength behind. Even in a format as traditional and weary as the interview, Trinh raises questions of truth-telling and authenticity. She questions the

truth in what you are seeing, moving the camera away from the speaker's face to frame her hands or the window. She questions the truth in what you are hearing or reading, using subtitles or accented speech. When the first series of interviews are revealed to have been staged, yet another layer of meaning is added to this film: Who are these women? By what experiences do we define them? Through what means do they define themselves? Trinh mentions at one point "the impossibility of a single truth in witnessing, remembering, recording, forgetting." As we partake of the images and sound, culled from memory, tradition, "objective" newsreels, legend, and text, we are made aware of our subjective presence as viewers. Trinh's films are designed to "awaken...reflective and critical ability." (T.T.M.) *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* wakes us gently, beautifully, and determinedly.

Trinh T. Minh-ha was born in Vietnam and has lived in France, Senegal and the United States. She is a filmmaker, writer and composer. Presently, she is teaching as the Chancellor's Distinguished Professor in Women's Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and as Associate Professor of Cinema at San Francisco State University. Her most recent book is *When The Moon Waxes Red* (Routledge, 1991), on film, gender, and cultural politics.

—Notes by Jenny Perlin

FLAMING CREATURES

by Jack Smith

Presented by Jim Hoberman

Sunday October 27, 1991

Flaming Creatures (1962-63); 16mm, b&w, sound, 45 minutes.

Normal Love (aka *Normal Fantasy*); 1964, [excerpt]

I always thought he was my best director. I mean, just the only person I would ever try to copy. (Andy Warhol, speaking of Jack Smith)

Flaming Creatures. Flaming Creatures! No single work in the history of the American underground film has been so venerated, so emulated (often with predictably sophomoric results), and so praised, yet so thoroughly misunderstood and unabashedly reviled. *Flaming Creatures* has existed for an entire generation of filmmakers and film viewers solely as the stuff of veiled legend, a masterwork hidden from view, a film about which so much had been teasingly written and talked about that it became almost impossible to believe that the object, the film, was actually real. Well, the creatures are stirring now and will soon awaken from a long sleep. *Flaming Creatures* lives!

"Very few films have had such a profound effect on me as Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures*, made in 1962/3 in New York. I feel that it belongs in the realm of films that become like monuments to visual (and film) language. It is a film made with the kind of honesty that penetrates the false barriers society encases us in, and because of that, it goes deep. Because of that it also provokes the chastisement of the social cross-bearers. For me, it is one of the strongest visual poems ever made and represents one of the few successful translations of fantasy to film. For police, for the film critics, for the politicians and the guardians of lies it became the film to crucify. It provoked arrests, confiscation and legal battles, resembling in this such films as *L'Âge d'Or* or *Un Chant d'Amour* or Manet's painting *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Such personal and creative honesty shakes our social stupor and conjures up our fear." (Steve Dwoskin, *Film Is...*, 1975)

"One can regard Smith's film as having, for its subject, the poetry of transvestitism. *Film Culture* in awarding *Flaming Creatures* its Fifth Independent Film Award, said of Smith: 'He has struck us not with the mere pity or curiosity of the perverse, but the glory, the pageantry of Transylvestia and the magic of Fairyland. He has lit up a part of life, although it is a part which most men scorn.' The truth is that *Flaming Creatures* is much more about intersexuality than about homosexuality. Smith's vision is akin to the vision of Bosch's paintings of a paradise and a hell of writhing, shameless, ingenious bodies. Unlike those serious and stirring films about the beauties and terrors of homoerotic love, Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* and Genet's *Un Chant d'Amour*, the important fact about the figures in Smith's film is that one cannot easily tell which are men and which are women. These are 'creatures,' flaming out in intersexual, polymorphous joy. The film is built out of a complex web of ambiguities and ambivalences, whose primary image is the confusion of male and female flesh. The shaken breast and the shaken penis become interchangeable with each other.

"*Flaming Creatures* is a triumphant example of an aesthetic vision of the world—and such a vision is perhaps always, at its core, epicene. But this type of art has yet to be understood in this country. The space in which *Flaming Creatures* moves is not the space of moral ideas, which is where American critics have traditionally located art...[it is] aesthetic space, the space of pleasure. Here Smith's film moves and has its being." (Susan Sontag, *The Nation*, 1964)

"Born in Columbus, Ohio in 1932, Smith frequented the movies as a youth, often sitting through the films several times over. He was especially entranced by the technicolor marvels, featuring such exotic stars as Maria Montez and Yvonne DeCarlo. The impression left by these exotic women remained with him throughout his life and frequently showed itself in his later film and performance work...Writing in *Film Culture*, Gregory Markopolous notes that Smith had discovered performers more important than the roles they portrayed: 'Anyone may step into the costume. The costume became the character and the character the costume.' Perhaps the most important and influential element of the film is its use of drag, an extension of costume. Although an ancient theatrical convention, drag was not widely employed by serious theater of the early sixties. A chic new style of drag was put forth in *Flaming Creatures*. Mario Montez as its prime representative would go on to influence and pave the way to stardom for Candy Darling, Holly Woodlawn and the entire Playhouse of the Ridiculous aesthetic...

"The film's impact was further garnered on the night of March 3, 1964, when the New York City Police Department seized a copy...along with rushes of Smith's work in progress, *Normal Love*, and Warhol's newsreel on the same subject. The raid was part of the city's clean sweep prior to the World's Fair. *Flaming Creatures* was deemed obscene by the court, and an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court was denied a hearing..."

—Joe E. Jeffreys, "Jack Smith: I Was a Seminal Influence for the Lucky Art-World Underground"
in *Movement Research Performance Journal* #2

From the mid-1960s on, Jack Smith astonished New York audiences with a series of highly influential performance pieces. While Smith's theater, even more fugitive and underground than his films, had attracted little critical writing, it made itself felt in the work of other artists as disparate as Ronald Tavel, Robert Wilson, John Vaccaro, and Richard Foreman. Smith's refusal to separate his persona from his art presaged the gallery-based "performance artists" of the mid-1970s. A seminal influence for the Art-World Underground, Jack Smith died from AIDS in September, 1989. Proceeds from tonight's screening will be used to preserve and disseminate his films.

J. Hoberman is a film critic for the *Village Voice* and has published several books on film, including *Midnight Movies* (with Jonathan Rosenbaum). His most recent book is *Vulgar Modernism, Writing on Movies and other Media* (Temple University Press).

Film critics are writers and they are hostile and uneasy in the presence of a visual phenomenon.

—Jack Smith

Films by Jack Smith:

Scotch Tape (1962)

Flaming Creatures (1962-63)

Normal Love aka *Normal Fantasy* (1964)

No President? (1969)

Films with Smith as Performer (partial list):

Little Stabs at Happiness (1958-61), by Ken Jacobs

Star Spangled to Death (1957 -), by Ken Jacobs

Blonde Cobra (1959-62), by Ken Jacobs & Bob Fleischner

The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man (1964), by Ron Rice

Chumlum (1964), by Ron Rice

Christmas on Earth (1963), by Barbara Rubin

The Trap Door (1980), by Beth and Scott B

Shadows in the City (1990), by Ari Roussimoff

—Notes by Albert Kilchesty

THE DEAD REANIMATED
Curated and presented by Jack Stevenson

Thursday, October 31, 1991

The theme of "the dead reanimated" is the focus of tonight's show. While this embodies a classic Halloween concept, I've tried to chose a unique approach to programming the show by utilizing both rarely shown feature AND short films to evoke the spirit of the active presence of the dead.

— Jack Stevenson

Jack Stevenson is the editor/publisher of the *Pandemonium* film book series which focuses on "underground" film personalities such as George and Mike Kuchar, John Waters, Divine, Mary Woronov, Mink Stole, and Kenneth Anger, among others. He recently started his own 16mm film print archive, collecting a wide variety of film rarities and curiosities, including all the films you will see on tonight's program. Films from Jack's collection have been presented at venues in this world, and others....This evening's program:

Nekromantik (1988), by Jörg Buttgerit; 16mm (blow-up from Super-8mm), color, mag. sound, 70 minutes.

This short feature-length horror film was made by an obsessed group of Germans from the Berlin area. The film is very popular in Germany, especially on the large "off-cinema" circuit. The film features an original music score by one of the cast members and amazingly proficient special effects considering the film's "no-budget" status. The film is a strange hybrid: thoroughly German, with a Teutonically morose undertow, the film also lays claim to being part European "art film," solidly influenced by the American splatter/horror genre.

"*Nekromantik* pulses with the true spirit of its own depraved subject matter and succeeds more hilariously than appallingly than the massive big-budgeted films that always seem to lack a little guts. And unlike a lot of gore

films of contemporary vintage, this is not a parody.”

—Jack Stevenson in *Film Threat* magazine

“Ground-breakingly gruesome.” (John Waters)

* * *

SHORTS

Two Scopitone shorts: *James Darren* (2.5 minutes)

The Kessler Sisters (2.5 minutes)

????????????????????*Parade of mystery trailers* ??????????????????????

Secrets of the Bat (10 minutes)

This short study of the bat, circa 1950s, poses as a pedestrian scientific examination of these curious creatures. Features a lot of great close-ups of the frightful beasts and is a must-inclusion in our Halloween show since no such program would be complete without at least one bat flying across the screen.

The Day I Died (1977); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Nominally an “educational” film to warn students against drinking and driving, the film transcends its stated purpose and plays out as an inspired genetic cross between a surrealist art film and a trash beach-party confessional. Shot in slow-motion and utilizing weird camera angles and sound collage, the film seeks to portray a dead teenage boy recalling the occurrences of the day he died from his grave. The film effectively creates this “netherworld” of the conscious dead: a place somewhere between life and death. The dead teenager recalls the events of that afternoon at the beach up to the point of the car accident in which he died. As he recalls the grief-stricken reactions of friends and parents, his voice takes on a desperate anguish, which is accompanied by gradually swelling electronic music effects. “I’m only 17...I CAN’T be dead,” he cries in growing disbelief at his tragic fate.

The film is a stunning and entertaining “atmospheric” piece counter-balanced by heavy-handed narration and the leaden moral tone which squarely types it an “educational film.” It’s schlocky, but at the same time almost avant-garde; dramatic and innovative but also utterly heavy-handed.

Options to Live (20 minutes)

A classic driver-ed film that plays almost as a “greatest hits” compilation of all those horrifyingly graphic films that gave you nightmares in high school. A bloody scrapbook of roadside tragedy circa the late 1950s to mid-60s. This contribution of “true gore” seems most fitting on this special evening when other Halloween shows feature only the simulated variety.

* * *

The Frozen Dead (1967), directed by Herbert J. Leder.

This under-rated and generally forgotten 1967 “trash” classic is described by Michael Weldon in his *Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film* as “an incredible film,” an “unheralded wonder.” Dana Andrews stars as a postwar Nazi scientist in England trying to revive Hitler’s top officials, now hanging in uniform in a walk-in freezer.

Film descriptions supplied by Jack Stevenson.

— Notes by Albert Kilchesty

*ILLUMINATED PAPER:
New Films by Donna Cameron
Artist in person*

Thursday, November 7, 1991

Donna Cameron attended the Rhode Island School of Design and received a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, where she studied filmmaking, painting and photography. She wrote stories and produced photo essays for the *Miami Herald*, and continued her studies in painting and drawing in Paris in the early '80s. She devised a paper emulsion film process which is used to great effect in a number of her films. She is currently working on *CIVILIZATION*, a found footage and multi-media film, in cooperation with Shirley Clarke. Donna Cameron's paintings are represented by the Emerging Collector in New York and the Joy Horwich Gallery in Chicago, and her paintings, photographs and films have been exhibited nationwide. She currently lives in Brooklyn.

Tonight's Program Includes:

Fauve (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 9.5 minutes.
Music by Peter Wetzler.

Donna Cameron at Work (1991), by Mike Kuchar; VHS, color, sound, 10 minutes.

Tyger Tyger (1990); 16mm, color, silent, 40 minutes.

NYC/Joshua Tree (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.
Music by Don Militello.

"*Tyger Tyger* and *Fauve* are paper emulsion films made from everyday objects, photos and photographic studies of New York City. The paper emulsion is a process of filmmaking which I developed in 1978, and which I have been using and improving since. I think of these films as symphonic, or pictorially musical. Just as a musician/composer uses and reuses his signature, or a melody, I rework certain passages throughout one piece and often into another. Certain passages in these films change, as I change their place or context...The original film is the skeleton, or structure. The film record is improvisational, something like jazz. The original structure is there, like a melody, to be reinterpreted again and again. The structure itself is a carefully constructed three-dimensional, multi-material collage. The various papers, objects, pieces of photos which comprise the 'emulsion' are sandwiched between (a) clear tape strips (b) paper strips treated with SIAB (a Kodak chemical that makes paper transparent and increases resiliency), or (c) layered between pieces of other objects.

"In *Tyger Tyger*, a 40-minute paper film portrait of New York City, I explore the possibility of film as a geofactive medium. By describing NYC in terms of its patterned distribution of people and animals, and in factors of its landmarks of land and sea and air, I have caused another geography to occur. This imagined place, filmic New York, exists. It is tactile and energetic. This is a result of the physical nature of this film. There are no frame lines in the original film. These 16mm-sized soft sculptures are visual rhythm strips. The frame line or meter is imposed upon, and then recorded from, the original film object by me and by my camera (or printer)."

—Notes by the filmmaker

* * *

The Life Experience Behind the Making of the *Tyger Tyger* Trilogy

I think this trilogy is about regeneration—physically, I was pregnant, gave birth, and raised a small child while I was making the trilogy...It was a most amazing experience, I wanted to reorder and record it, the process and the haunting of it.

Fauve, the first film of the trilogy, is about the formation of the “wild film creature.” It is a contained, womb-like environment. The picture moves fluidly in its concavo-convex (really the lens of my printer) environment. It is controlled by monotonous visually, and the sound is composed and contained on a synthesizer.

In the central film, *Tyger Tyger*, the film creature is given its freedom and moves into a vitality and totality of filmic being—images beget images, framelines spew frameless lines, film surfaces appear to breathe, it's as though you're watching the movement of a huge film creature, noting its skin textures and the landscape of its being. This is an unsafe, scary film in the sense that it represents total artistic freedom—there is no safe retreat, i.e. sound, plot, character, or the absence thereof. There is no conventional film punctuation. It is like a young child, demanding and dependent upon the viewer, and marvelous in its unpredictability.

The third film, *Joshua Tree*, introduces music again, this time moody, liberated phrases of contemporary instrumental sound. The picture is again the *Tyger Tyger* imagery and paper, but includes the more conventional photography that inspired rhythms and passages in *Tyger Tyger* and *Fauve*. In this film the wild film creature is guided through the landscape of itself holding onto this fearful musical companion, the soundtrack. The soundtrack, composed to exist simultaneously and extemporaneously with the picture, does not illustrate it emotionally or give feeling guidelines as in *Fauve*. In this film the tyger (footage and all) meets its mirror image, underlies its physical limits and becomes the burning *Tyger Tyger*—the creature caged in its own mythology, pacing its way to an inevitable end. To me, this film is about the haunting, which is a strange and unreachable memory of my childhood, which is an angelic native remaining through all aspects of my life. It is the *Tyger Tyger* which is hope, in its sustaining form.

—Donna Cameron

Note: “The Edited Coat,” created by Los Angeles artist and designer Susan Nininger will be worn by the filmmaker. “The Edited Coat” is made exclusively with the film materials used to make the 16mm film, *Fauve*, including soundtrack, negative, and protected handmade emulsion.

Mike Kuchar is a legendary underground filmmaker. He most recently worked as cinematographer for Rosa von Praunheim on a two-part documentary about AIDS (*Positive* and *Silence = Death*) which was produced for German television.

Donna Cameron Filmography:

News (1980)

Unicorn (1980-86)

Dracula and the Babysitter (1986)

Joshua Tree (1986)

The Superweapon (1987)

New Moon (1987)

End (1987)

The Chinese Lunch (1988)

The Falcon (1988)

Fauve (1990)

Tyger Tyger (1991)
NYC/Joshua Tree (1991)

—Notes by Albert Kilchesty

**NO MORE HEROES:
UNVEILING MASCULINITY**
Curated by Barbara DeGenevieve
Co-sponsored by SF Camerawork
Program 1

Saturday, November 9, 1991

Since the late 70s, the portrayal of the male body has become increasingly present in the work of both men and women. But it has been a curious and reluctant subject, often appearing in the gallery or museum context with disclaimers at the door that rarely, if ever, accompany female representation. The most obvious reason for this double standard is the fact that the penis/phallus represents power in Western culture. But as theorists have noted, in order to maintain power, the phallus must be "veiled." The veiling, then, often manifests as the exclusion or censoring of the male body or any critical analysis of masculinity in the public arena...

Within the context of contemporary image making, the work in the exhibition represents a radical change, particularly in regard to the representation of the myth of masculinity. Male artists are now beginning to turn inward and analyze, both personally and culturally, their precariously constructed positions within Western society, while female artists continue their scrutiny of the machinations of male power...

The purpose of this exhibition, then, is to open a dialogue not simply about the male body as a subject/object, but about the idea of male identity. The popular perception of masculinity as being about strength and control, roughly equivalent to the image represented by the Marlboro man, is as essentializing and narrow as the stereotypes of softness and vulnerability have been for women. The influence of feminism has undeniably altered perceptions of male identity, and whether or not one aligns oneself with its cultural goals and/or theoretical positions, it must be acknowledged that there has been a shift in the representation of the male body that is unprecedented in history. This exhibition has been organized to look at this change and perhaps try to make some sense out of a unique and transitional period of contemporary image making.

—Barbara DeGenevieve

Tonight's Program Includes:

Don't Be A Dick (1990), by Deke Weaver; 3/4" videotape, 2 minutes.

Must Be For Real, by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 8.5 minutes.

Untitled (A Hard Man is Good to Find), by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 1.5 minutes.

Untitled (Sugar, Lemons, Pie), by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 10 minutes.

Campaign 1991, by Margaret Crane/Jon Winet; 3/4" videotape, 5 minutes.

Mirror Mirror (1987), by Paula Levine ; 3/4" videotape, 3 minutes.

Meditations, by Sammy Cucher; 3/4" videotape, 6 minutes.

15 Minutes and 34 Seconds of Same Sex, (1991) by Gabriel Sena; 3/4" videotape, 15 minutes.

Give It To Him, by Paula Levine; 3/4" videotape, 6 minutes.

You(r) Sex and Other Stuff (1991), by Katherine Hurbis-Cherrier; 3/4" videotape, 3 minutes.

(Tell Me Why) The Epistemology of Disco, by John DiStefano; 3/4" videotape, 28 minutes.

—Notes by Jenny Perlin

TO LAVOISIER WHO DIED IN THE REIGN OF TERROR
by *Michael Snow*

Sunday, November 14, 1991

“One of a dozen living inventors of film art is Michael Snow. His work has already modified our perception of past film. Seen or unseen, it will affect the making and understanding of film in the future.” (Hollis Frampton)

See You Later/Au Revoir (1990); 16mm, color, sound, 18 minutes.

Actors: Michael Snow, Peggy Gale; Camera: Ira Cohen; Set Design and Lighting: Michael Snow.

Plot: A man leaves an office.

Described by Snow as a “slightly activated Vermeer,” *See You Later/Au Revoir* depicts a simple action, recorded with a Super Slo-Mo video camera. The sync sound of the typewriter and two voices (He: “Goodbye” She: “See You Later”) was slowed down as well.

To Lavoisier Who Died in the Reign of Terror (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 53 minutes.

Image collaboration by Carl Brown.

Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) was a French chemist who gave the first accurate scientific explanation of the mysteries of fire. He also proved the law of the conservation of matter which states that matter can be neither created nor destroyed. Substances change forms. He wrote the first chemical equations and with other chemists worked out the present-day system of chemical names. This work helped make photography possible.

Lavoisier was an extraordinary person who made great contributions to science but also to the lives of the French people of his time. He established experimental agricultural stations and tried to improve farming methods. He was murdered by the leaders of the French Revolution (the “Convention”).

His work and this film are situated between modern chemistry and alchemy. The film stages a drama of abstraction and theoretical realism, *La Vie Quotidienne* seen photo-chemically and musically. The film is a materialist projected-image conservation of matter.

“Call it a chemical conflagration...Snow’s latest celebrates the original entertainment spectacle. *To Lavoisier* opens, in silence, with a close-up of a wood-burning stove and then a hand feeding the flames. After a time, we

hear an unmistakable crackle. Sustained more or less throughout the films remaining 40-odd minutes, the sound of the fire comes to seem the song of the medium...What's extraordinary about *To Lavoisier* is not what the film shows (or how it shows it) but the film stuff itself...The footage looks as if it were developed in a bathtub and baked in the oven. The emulsion is scarred, lightstruck, watermarked, solarized, explosively blotched with a deep blue or golden orange overlay. The visual surface 'noise' is continually amazing. There's a pattern beneath every pattern and that pattern is as vibrantly random as a toddler's scribble-scrabble."

—J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*

Referred to as the "dean" of structuralist filmmakers, Canadian filmmaker Michael Snow is also internationally recognized as a sculptor, painter, photographer and musician. His works in all media have been exhibited worldwide. His sculpture of Canadian geese in flight, *Flight Stop*, located in Toronto's subterranean Eaton Center, has been described in utopian terms as "visionary freedom in enclosure." It's one of the most popular public sculptures in the world. He has performed and recorded with his own improvisational music group, CCMC, since the 1970s and released a recording, *The Last LP* (a sterling parody of ethnographic field recordings), under his own name in 1987. He was formerly married to Canadian painter and filmmaker Joyce Wieland.

Michael Snow Partial Filmography:

New York Eye and Ear Control (1964)

Wavelength (1967)

←→ (*Back and Forth*) (1969)

One Second in Montreal (1969)

La Region Centrale (1971)

"Rameau's Nephew" by Diderot (*Thanx to Dennis Young*) by Wilma Schoen (1974)

Breakfast (Table Top Dolly) (1976)

Presents (1981)

So Is This (1982)

Seated Figures (1988)

See You Later/Au Revoir (1990)

To Lavoisier Who Died in the Reign of Terror (1991)

—Notes by Albert Kilchesty

**NO MORE HEROES :
UNVEILING MASCULINITY
Curated by Barbara DeGenevieve
Co-sponsored by SF Camerawork
Program II**

Saturday, November 16, 1991

Ajay, by Stacey Ann Cohen; 3/4" videotape, 2.5 minutes.

The Body, by Jordan Biren (1990); 3/4" videotape, 15 minutes.

29 Effeminate Gestures, by Tim Boxell; 3/4" videotape, 8 minutes.

Mating Call, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 30 seconds.

Well I Was, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 20 seconds.

Hey That's My Toy, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 10 seconds.

Punch, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 5 seconds.

I'm Here, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 21 seconds.

Girls in Bikinis, by Skip Arnold; 3/4" videotape, 25 seconds.

Allegory, by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 2 minutes.

Untitled (Cucumber Erection), by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 1.5 minutes.

The One/The Other, by Brad Hudson; 3/4" videotape, 3 minutes.

Campaign 1991, by Margaret Crane/ Jon Winet; 3/4" videotape, 5 minutes.

Two Bad Daughters, by Barbara Hammer and Paula Levine; 3/4" videotape, 12 minutes.

Fatherandson: Transitional, Period, by Deke Weaver; 3/4" videotape, 14 minutes.

Song From An Angel, by David Weissman; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes.

No Pain, No Gain, by Tom Brozovich; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes.

THE DILEXI SERIES
Curated and presented by Steve Seid

Sunday, November 17, 1991

Originally aired on KQED TV (PBS) in San Francisco in 1969, the Dilexi Series represents a pioneering effort to present works created by artists specifically for broadcast. The 12-part weekly series was conceived and commissioned by the Dilexi Foundation, an off-shoot of the influential San Francisco art gallery founded by James Newman. Newman, who operated the Dilexi Gallery from 1958 until 1970, saw this innovative series as an opportunity to extend the influence of the contemporary arts far beyond the closeted environment of the commercial gallery.

Formal agreement was reached with KQED in 1968 with the station's own John Coney designated as series producer. No restrictions regarding length, form or content were imposed upon the works, except for Newman's stipulation that they be aired weekly within the same time slot in order to gather an audience.

Of the 12 artists invited to participate in the Dilexi series (Julian Beck, Walter De Maria, Kenneth Dewey, Robert Frank, Ann Halprin, Philip Makanna, Robert Nelson, Yvonne Rainier, Terry Riley, Edwin Schlossberg, Andy

Warhol and Frank Zappa), ten of them completed new works, and two, Andy Warhol and Frank Zappa, submitted extant works. The tapes and films are far-reaching in their approaches to the medium and the circumstance of the broadcast series.

"If the 60s meant anything as a unifying principle or idea, it meant a lack of caution that I don't see around much anymore. Certainly, there is nothing like the KQED of the 60s. You could barely get past the reception lobby today at Channel 9 with a proposal for a Dilexi type series. It was wide open: all the facilities, color quad studio cameras, location film equipment, whatever, were available at what was calculated to be their cost, an amount not to exceed \$1,000 per production. The artists were commissioned for \$500 each. It seemed daring at the time, perhaps it was. Anyway, we just went ahead and did it and, to a degree, it worked."

—James Newman in 1982

Burnt Weenie Sandwich, by Frank Zappa; broadcast on 4/30/69, 3/4" tape from 16mm film, b&w/color, sound, 18 minutes.

Music by Zappa, mostly from the *Uncle Meat* LP. Photographed by Zappa and others. Optical effects by Burton C. Gershfield. Produced by Herb Cohen. With the Mothers of Invention, Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band. The antics of the Mothers of Invention are further accelerated by heavily compressed film footage into a high-octane home movie. Completed about ten years before MTV went on the air.

The Paul Swan Film, by Andy Warhol; broadcast on 6/18/69, 3/4" tape from 16 mm film, color, sound, 30 minutes.

Paul Swan was a contemporary of Isadora Duncan. At age 83, we see him recite poetry and perform a number of stylized dance numbers. The gaudy setting and single take makes this a painful experience, more for Swan than the viewer. Warhol's relentless eye focuses on Swan's ageless yearning for celebrity.

Rite of Guerilla Theater, by Julian Beck and the Living Theater; broadcast on 5/28/69, 3/4" tape from 16mm film, b&w, sound, 25.5 minutes.

Photographed by Eugene Doherty and Seth Hill. Edited by Eugene Doherty. Produced by John Coney. With the Living Theater and the students of Mills College.

Before each performance the Living Theater would "orient" the audience by first infiltrating it, then imparting some 60s wisdom, then requesting participation from the gathered hordes. In this Mills College performance, Julian Beck leads the proceedings with an assist from Judith Malina. The topic for this orientation are the prohibitions imposed by society.

The Empire of Things, by Philip Makanna; broadcast on 5/7/69, 3/4" tape from 16mm film, b&w/color, sound, 20 minutes.

Video colorization by Larry Bentley and Wayne McDonald. Produced by John Coney. Based on a short story by H.L. Mountzoures.

An experimental narrative, using a text by H.L. Mountzoures which describes a post-apocalyptic culture. Original and found footage anchors the story in a Vietnam-era sensibility. While using a film chain for the transfer to videotape, color and image were manipulated to create a distorted image of the world depicted. This is a very early example of the use of electronic technology and film imagery.

Music With Balls, by Terry Riley and Arlo Acton; broadcast on 4/16/69, 3/4" tape from 2" High Band Videotape, color, sound, 24 minutes.

Video Mix by John Coney.

Acton's sculptures and Riley's synthesized music collide in this beautifully rendered performance with multi-layered visualizations. Riley uses pre-recorded tapes, a tape player, and a saxophone in a fine-tuned work that melds lyrical repetition with its optical counterpart. This piece, the first Dilexi Series tape broadcast, wonderfully captures the intent of James Newman's initial vision for the Dilexi Series.

11 P.M. Free Screening

What Do You Talk About?, by Robert Nelson and William Wiley; broadcast on 5/21/69, 3/4" tape from 2" High Band Videotape, color, sound, 88 minutes.

With Lew Welch, Dominic Laducer, and Bill Allen.

The talk show format is lampooned in this "in-studio" production by filmmaker Nelson and co-host Wiley. Their guests are the legendary Beat poet Lew Welch who discusses football, local sculptor Bill Allen who discusses pool, and S.F. Art Institute student Dominic Laducer who discusses fishing. The ever-charismatic and highly-talkative Lew Welch steals the show.

Other works in the Dilexi Series, with original date of broadcast:

Making Visible, by Edwin Schlossberg, 4/23/69

Right On, by Ann Halprin, 5/14/69

Dance Fractions for the West Coast, by Yvonne Rainier, 6/11/69

Night-Eye, Fire, by Kenneth Dewey, 6/25/69

Conversations in Vermont, by Robert Frank, 7/9/69

Hardcore, by Walter De Maria, 7/30/69

Steve Seid is the video curator at the Pacific Film Archive. The Cinematheque would like to thank him for his research into the Dilexi Series and his dedication to making these works available for viewing once again. Steve selected the works on tonight's program as a "greatest hits" package of Dilexi tapes.

— Notes by Albert Kilchesty

NOMADS at the 25 DOOR
Recent Videotapes by Jeanne C. Finley
Artist in person

Thursday, November 21, 1991

At the Museum: A Pilgrimage of Vanquished Objects (1989); 3/4" videotape, 23 minutes.

Assistant Director: John Muse; Director of Photography: Jim Meek; Production Assistant: Laura James; Original Music Score: Kevin Deal.

This videotape was produced during an Artist-in-Residence stint at the Oakland Museum. The museum requested an artist's interpretation of the Museum's displays and collections, including the History, Natural Science and Art Departments. This tape is about archiving and documenting culture in the 20th century. It explores how all types of archiving, including documentary filmmaking, inevitably creates its own history from the artifacts it collects.

Using the Oakland Museum's displays and collections as an environment, the narrator of *At the Museum: A Pilgrimage of Vanquished Objects* leads the viewer on a tour of a mythical museum. Although at first the viewer might think the tape is a traditional documentary, its experimental nature is revealed as the displays and the individuals represented within them come alive and discuss their role as artifact and image contrasts with their actual lives. The tour guide suggests a variety of interpretations of each display which challenges the authority of the educational museum, documentary filmmaking and the voice of the narrator itself.

Common Mistakes (1986); 3/4" videotape, 13.5 minutes.

Common Mistakes uses the four synonyms of the word 'mistake' ('fallacy,' 'error,' 'accident,' and 'blunder') to present a sample of widely held "truths" that have later proven to be misconceptions. The mistakes are illustrated with documentary "Before" and "After" photographs, diagrams, and video footage, and prefaced with a clip from a children's educational film on how to prevent accidents. Intercut between each mistake, a silhouetted figure delivers a brief monologue on the manner in which these broad social errors affected their individual lives. This contrast suggests both a compliancy and victimization of the individual in relation to issues such as racism, environmental pollution and imperialism.

Involuntary Conversion (1991); 3/4" videotape, color, stereo sound, 9 minutes.

Director, Editor, Photographer: Jeanne C. Finley; Additional Camera: Chip Lord and Starr Sutherland; Original Music: Kevin Deal.

This tape is scripted entirely from Double-Speak language, all of which was taken directly from various media sources. Translations for the terminology appear as text on the screen. The urban environment becomes the site for tactical language, rendering our daily lives an arena in which permanent pre-hostility (peace) is dominant. The visual imagery, shot in a variety of locations, creates a rhythm of threat that is punctuated by high altitude shots of military jets. The science fiction of our fear is instilled as the condition of our interaction with those around us.

NOMADS at the 25 DOOR (1991); 3/4" videotape, 40 minutes.

NOMADS is constructed in three chapters and narrated in the voice of three exiles, including Micky, a 22-year-old woman serving a double life sentence in the Nevada Women's Correctional Institution for the murder of her mother. In exile, the memory and desire for the homeland serves to shape the dwelling of the present, preventing a return even when a physical return is possible. Much of the footage was shot in the Balkans during the 1989/90 melting of the cold war which allowed many exiles to return to their native countries. The narratives of three very different people serve to illusively document the shifts in power between the individual and their family, between the government and its people, between the documented and the betrayed, between our training for the stability of home and the fragility of our memory.

—Jeanne Finley

San Francisco-based video artist Jeanne C. Finley has lectured on photography and video at the San Francisco Art Institute, the University of California in San Diego, and at the San Francisco State University. She is currently Associate Dean of Fine Arts, 4-D studies at the California College of Arts and Crafts. Her photography and video works have been exhibited at a variety of international venues and festivals, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the George Pompidou Center in Paris. Her best known video work includes:

I Saw Jesus in a Tortilla (1982)

Deaf Dogs Can Hear (1983)

Common Mistakes (1986)

Accidental Confessions (1987)

At the Museum: A Pilgrimage of Vanquished Objects (1989)

Involuntary Conversion (1990)

NOMADS at the 25 DOOR (1991)

NOTES IN ORIGIN

*A multimedia presentation by Ellie Epp
Co-sponsored by the Canadian Consulate General
Artist in person*

Saturday, November 23, 1991

notes in origin (1977-); 16mm film, 35mm slides, audio tape, live presentation, 1.5 hours.

from 1977 to 1981 with a first-stage production grant i went to live in northern alberta during the time i was up north i lived usually alone in a farmhouse among fields i was refinding and recording a sense of place i had known as a child as much as i dared and was able i made myself available to the spirits of the place (but what are they) there often seemed to be some firmly operant intentional connection between the place and my movements in it i'd for instance have a sense of being called out with the camera at certain times of day

the connection seems to me visible in the work, as in the slide made with a guessed exposure almost in the dark of two weeds in the presence of a third invoking a unified system where the gazer is pictured in the seen

i've also thought the images look as tho a child cooperated in their making

the tapes recording the difficulty of being a person in that place (ie among persons) are some of them excruciating

i wanted to know what is place, what is the feeling for place, what is the glamour of place, what is its relation to dream and image, what is its relation to childhood and to origin more generally

and: how is this (felt, mythic) relation to place different from the way it is lived by the farm families, and why

— ellie epp

Ellie Epp grew up on a farm in northern Canada and studied philosophy at Queen's University, Kingston. While living in London, England during the early '70s she was an early member of the London Film Coop and the English womens' movement. She has a postgraduate diploma in film studies from the Slade School of Art. Her film *Trampoline* was released in 1976. Since 1975 she has been living in Vancouver, Canada where, among other things, she is a philosophy teacher and community garden activist.

FORBIDDEN FILMS: SEXUAL SUBVERSIONS

Sunday, November 24, 1991

Christmas on Earth (1963), by Barbara Rubin; 16mm, b&w, silent w/radio sound, 29.25 minutes, dual-projection.

A syllogism: Barbara Rubin has no shame; angels have no shame; Barbara Rubin is an angel.

—Jonas Mekas

Called “a study in genital differentiation and psychic tumult,” Barbara Rubin’s *Christmas on Earth* is an essential product of the most fertile period of American underground filmmaking. *Flaming Creatures* had not yet been busted and Jack Smith was shooting his color sequel *Normal Love*. Ron Rice was editing *The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man*, the Film-Makers’ Coop had recently been established, Jonas Mekas had just discovered George and Mike Kuchar, and Andy Warhol was toying with the idea of buying a Bolex. Barbara Rubin, a 17-year-old schoolgirl from Queens, influenced by everything that was in the air at that time—*Flaming Creatures*, the films of Brakhage, Kenneth Anger’s *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* and other films—borrowed a camera and produced *Christmas on Earth*, far and away the most sexually explicit film to startle the preporn avant-garde.

“*Christmas on Earth* is an ethereal tangle of Dayglo faces and dangling cocks, guys posing as Greek statues and girls painted like archaic fertility goddesses, fingers probing cunts and assholes in bleached black-and white and mega-close-up. The camera explores bodies with a kind of ecstatic curiosity, neither clinical nor precious so much as bluntly innocent...

“Embarrassingly worthy of an *Edie*-style biography, Rubin was one of the ’60s key scene-makers. She led the charge when *Flaming Creatures* was shown illegally in Knokke-le-Zout and engulfed the Belgian minister of culture in a riot; she introduced Allen Ginsberg to Bob Dylan and Andy Warhol to the Velvet Underground; she organized New York’s first light-shows and squired visiting dignitaries like Donovan and the Byrds around the city. By the early ’70s she found religion, and joined an ultra-orthodox Jewish sect. Around 1979 she died giving birth to her sixth child...” (J. Hoberman, *Village Voice*)

Un Chant D’Amour (1950), by Jean Genet; 16mm, b&w, silent, 20 minutes.

Un Chant d’Amour was written and directed by Jean Genet and produced by Nico Papadakis (the husband of French actress, Anouk Aimee). A friend and great admirer of Genet, Papadakis intended to produce a limited number of prints for private collections; the film was never meant to be shown to general audiences. Genet himself referred to it as an “enfantillage.” The film was made by professional cameramen on 35mm film with specially built sets. The qualities of Genet, the homosexual criminal with a genius for theater, are evident in this lyric cinema fragment, based on his first novel, *Our Lady of the Flowers*.

Genet’s tender and explicit rendering of the desperate erotic longings and fantasies of men in prison was effectively suppressed from public presentation until the 1960s. When it was exhibited during that period, it was subject to outrageous attacks from the mainstream film press. Following is an excerpt from a review of *Un Chant D’Amour*, written by Stanley Eichelbaum, which appeared in a San Francisco newspaper in the late ’60s/early ’70s.

There aren’t many tabus left in the creative fields. And the cinema—once the most puritanical of the arts—has been astonishingly liberalized in the last few decades, so that issues formerly considered immoral and even obscene are now openly discussed without offending the average sensibility. And I am staunchly behind this newfound maturity, so long as integrity and taste are exercised. But I cannot see how a responsible critic or, for that matter, a responsible film-maker can defend a loaded and erotic movie about homosexuality among convicts entitled *Un Chant d’Amour*....The movie was written and directed by Jean Genet, whose literature about the soul and poetry of evil has achieved extraordinary notoriety both here and abroad, especially since he is an avowed homosexual with a long prison record...So explicit are the details of aberrated love-making and sexual fantasy that Genet’s theme of frustration, despair and brutality in an all-male prison society is only incidental...the spectator is insultingly forced to play the role of voyeur...If art cannot be selective in sexual matters, it becomes pornography. And in this instance, the embarrassing, literal spelling out of auto-eroticism and perversion is not only offensive, but too strong a helping for general consumption. Public presentation of *Un Chant d’Amour* is difficult to justify, even by those firmly opposed to movie censorship, as I am. It shows poor judgement and deplorable taste, which are, after all, incompatible with all the arts.

Son of Sam and Delilah (1991), by Charles Atlas; 3/4" videotape, color, sound, 26 minutes.

"New York City 1988. Raging homophobia. A killer on the loose. Disco dancing till dawn. Performers struggle to survive. Delilah seduces Samson in song. Gender illusionists go shopping. Samson and Delilah, 1991. This videotape is an entertaining amalgam of cross-cut scenes featuring New York performance luminaries including John Kelly, Hapi Phace, and DANCENOISE. It is a dark vision of an America where life is cheap and even the moments of tenderness have a life threatening edge." (Charles Atlas)

Son of Sam and Delilah was recently banned by PBS.

—Notes by Albert Kilchesty

"God doesn't care what movies i watch..."
Curated and presented by Mark McElhatten

Thursday, December 5, 1991

"This is the cinema! A nonentity in the shadows, a fly shitting on the screen, wild horses deep in your eyes, the wind's hair...your hands pitted like lunar craters with the large intestine under the nails—is all that me?—It's you! - But I don't recognize myself?—Indeed? Just look; look hard—the lens has swollen your face into an abscess. It is you, this thick blood, this suspended flower, this new shadow in the light, this kernel, this black eye, this dark streak, this crack in the spectroscopic analysis, this bean— it's you. Don't hesitate; move! You are dead; move! You are curled in a spiral; unwind! You are born into the reality of the cinema; move! Jump!" —Blaise Cendrars, from *Une nuit dans la foret* (1925).

introit: Secrets in the hive; 16mm film shown silent w/music of Tuva (overtonal singing of Central Asian herders, imitations of reindeer, owls, etc.)

Taser gun tests; 16mm film shown silent w/sound excerpt of Evangelical vocal ravaging (six-year-old Roumanian girl)

What the frost does (hypodermic boy)

Signore di tutte (excerpt) (1934), by Max Ophuls

Pitfall (excerpt), by Andre De Toth

Fat Heart, by Jon Brattin

Thimble Theatre, by Joseph Cornell/Larry Jordan

Glimpses of Soviet Science, 16mm documentary shown silent

Le Vampire, by Jean Painlevé

Sabotaging Spring, by Joe Gibbons

Beatles by the Bay, found newsreel camera footage--sound is missing

Elevator Music, by Lewis Klahr

Kodachrome home movie; 16mm, silent

La Quatrieme Dimension, by Jean Painlevé

Mantilla (formerly *Picture of a Hole*); by Julie Murray

Murder Psalm; by Stan Brakhage

Special thanks to Julie Murray, Bill Daniel, Craig Baldwin, Kathy Geritz, Aaron Noble, Mom, Pop, and all the staff of the S. F. Cinematheque.

—Notes by Mark McElhatten

IDENTITY: CANADIAN
Curated and presented by Fumiko Kiyooka

Sunday, December 8, 1991

A program which consists of some Canadian shorts which deal with attitudes of self and sexuality.

How does one Identify themselves?

In relation to name, occupation, country of origin, family or no family, to how they did it before and how we'll do it now, to ideologies; but is that the essence of identity?

As individuals we identify ourselves first in relation to sexual similarity or difference and how that measures up (or not) to ideas of what a society has dictated (sexual) identity to be.

Being Canadian is coming from a locale and the landscape from which voices make up an identity.

— Fumiko Kiyooka

Tonight's Program Includes:

Sabina, by Katherine Li; 16mm, 7 minutes.

Divine Mannequin (1989), by David Rimmer; 16mm, color, sound, 7 minutes.

We're Talking Vulva, by Shawna Dempsey; 16mm, color, sound, 5 minutes.

A Place with Many Rooms (1987), by Fumiko Kiyooka; 16mm, color, sound, 15 minutes.

Shaggie (1990), by Janice Cole; 16mm, color, sound, 12 minutes.

The Front Lawn (1990), by Michael McGarry; 16mm, sound, 11 minutes.

Rubblewomen (1985), by Gamma Bak; 16mm, color, sound, 16 minutes.

Red Shift (1991), by Mike Hoolboom; 16mm, color, sound, 2 minutes.

Fumiko Kiyooka graduated from Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, B.C.) in 1985 with a B.A. in Fine and Performing Arts and has been working primarily as a producer and filmmaker since then.

Tonight's program is presented with the assistance of the Government of Canada and the Canadian Consulate General of San Francisco/Avec L'aide du gouvernement du Canada.

INTIMATE STRANGER

by Alan Berliner

Artist in person

Thursday, December 12, 1991

A self-proclaimed collector, Alan Berliner has been developing his own language for recreating-via-editing since 1973, when he entered the film program at SUNY Binghamton. In 1979 he received an MFA in film and video from the University of Oklahoma. He has earned his living as a free-lance editor of independent films and television news. He has produced a series of eleven experimental documentaries, many of which fall into the genre of found-footage films. Movement and sound and associations made through editing transform disparate images into a collection, a family of images.

City Edition (1980); 16mm, b&w, sound, 9 mins.

"...the newspaper page...you have very loud and noisy headlines...you have a mosaic space made up of unconnected items from every part of the world at once...The total discontinuity, the total lack of storyline...in telegraphed news...is as sophisticated as Picasso..." (Marshall McLuhan)

Everywhere at Once (1980); 16mm, color, sound, 8.75 minutes.

"...is a musical montage, a synchronized symphony composed from an infinity of elements at hand: piano chords and cable cars, cocktail jazz and broken glass, looney tunes and telephones, elephants and xylophones, violins and vultures, orchestras and roller coasters...a journey in images at the speed of sound." (AB)

The birds, planes, animals, and machinery of earlier work such as *Everywhere at Once* (1980) were replaced by the more intimate home movies (both his and others) in *The Family Album* (1986). This sixty minute film which screened at festivals around the world and was broadcast on public television in 1989 as part of PBS' "P.O.V." series earned Berliner a wider audience and greater notoriety.

"*The Family Album* invokes the ways in which individual families remake and fabricate their own history in books of their own design, an appropriation and rewriting of history from below...(It) elaborates how this (Foucault's) reversal of forces and appropriation of media vocabulary by amateur film destroys our notions of history as one of events performed by military forces and presidents. *The Family Album* leads us into a marginal territory that is also well known and recognizable: the family."

—Patricia R. Zimmerman, *AFTERIMAGE*, Summer 1988

"Whereas *The Family Album* suggested our individual American stories through a generic, communal history, *Intimate Stranger*, moves in the reverse direction."

—Michael Fox, *Release Print*, Dec.-Jan. 1991-92

Intimate Stranger (1991); 16mm, color, sound, 60 minutes.

Intimate Stranger brings us to a place which is both familiar and foreign, close and distanced. We share with Berliner his unraveling of, as he calls them, "convenient fictions" inherent in the family history and the unveiling or re-weaving of a "new mythology." Memories of weekly childhood visits to his grandfather's—which he spent sorting and labelling photographs and letters—sat in the back of the filmmaker's mind since his grandfather's death seventeen years ago. Boxes upon boxes of records, including an unfinished autobiography, *Life of a Good Samaritan*, had been put into storage and Berliner knew they were waiting for him. So who was this man to have been writing an autobiography and meticulously documenting his life? An ordinary man, an extraordinary man, a nobody, a good friend, a dedicated businessman, a devoted husband and father? And for whom is he leaving this trail ?

The materials left behind and voices of family members and friends interviewed by Berliner depict a character more multifaceted and three dimensional than the slickest of Hollywood narratives. This film reminds the viewer of the source of narrative and reinforces the universal resonance of the so-called "personal film." *Intimate Stranger* is more than a portrait of Joseph Cassuto, a Palestinian Jew raised in Egypt who worked in Japan while his family stayed in Brooklyn. It carries us across many terrains of culture, history, emotions and philosophy. The trail of this man's life, as anyone's, contains interstices between the personal and the public, the individual and the world.

The process of discovering and creating a story—a life—is brought out in Berliner's style, which incorporates text, film and sound materials. The film opens with a convergence of media which will assist us through time and source shifts throughout the remainder of the film. A replay of the film countdown leader is portrayed with keys of a typewriter. The sound of the keys is joined by a siren which leads to a color close-up of rain and police lights and the report of Cassuto's death. The family's voices telling the story of his death immediately establish intimacy with the audience even before the title of the film is seen. The lack of identification on his dead body sets up an ironic contrast with the plethora of records Cassuto left behind.

As the family members are later identified, the multiple planes on which the audience can interact and identify are brought out. As we hear a woman's voice saying, "My father...", typed letters appear on the screen which read, "My mother," labelling the relationship to the filmmaker. The viewer can shift his or her position from that of a person trying to make decisions about his or her life, to an abandoned family member, to an appreciative friend, to a grandson recreating a life. By the end of the film, the viewer almost becomes an honorary member of "the family upon whom Joseph Cassuto's memory casts a shadow." The gravestones appear not as anonymous slabs of concrete, but speak to us and the story we have just witnessed. As Alan Berliner put it, "We are all implicated in the lives of others." This film resonates long past the credits.

"Ultimately, these films document my need to put order to my universe, a place burdened by my need to make the puzzles fit the pieces." (AB)

Alan Berliner Filmography

Patent pending (1975)

Line (1976)

Perimeter (1976)

Color Wheel (1977)

Lines of Force (1979)

City Edition (1980)

Myth in the Electric Age (1981)

Natural History (1983)
Everywhere at Once (1985)
The Family Album (1986)

—Notes by Susanne Fairfax

**OFFERINGS AND CONFISCATIONS:
ANIMATION FOR THE SEASON**
Curated and presented by Eric S. Theise

Sunday, December 15, 1991

When I learned that this fall's animation show had been slotted for the last evening of the calendar, it seemed only fitting that the show tackle Christmas. But a show of Christmas animations? Would Linus and Lucy, Frosty the Snowman, and the Grinch be welcomed here at the Cinematheque?

It seemed to me that the show should instead use the Christmas legend as a point of departure. It needed to be a program with holy fools and wise men, with kings and paupers, generosity and selflessness, treachery and betrayal, birth and death and resurrection, radiance and gloom, pre-Christian paganism and post-Nietzsche disillusionism (whew!). And it had to be under an hour and a half.

Tonight's program ricochets through all of these archetypes and constraints. At the same time, it resonates unexpectedly as it dredges up a variety of artistic styles and historical movements, with destructive water and snowscapes. Toilet bowls and bodily excretions put in their strongest appearance since our George Kuchar retrospective. Uh, happy holidays.

Special thanks to the Exploratorium Film Program (Marina McDougall and Liz Keim) for allowing us to use their double system projector for this program.

Tonight's Program Includes:
(All films are 16mm, color, with sound.)

Pixel by David Ehrlich (1987); 3 minutes, print: Museum of Modern Art.

Une Vielle Boite/An Old Box by Paul Driessen (1975); 9.5 minutes, print: Museum of Modern Art.

River Lethe by Amy Kravitz (1984); 7.5 minutes, print: Picture Start Collection at Chicago Filmmakers.

Ubu by Geoff Dunbar (1978); 16 minutes, print: Picture Start Collection at Chicago Filmmakers.

Landscape with Fall of Icarus by Chris Sullivan (1991); 21.5 minutes, print: Chris Sullivan.

Luna Tune by Carol Clement (1978); 2 minutes, print: Women Make Movies.

Asparagus by Suzan Pitt (1979); 19 minutes, print: Museum of Modern Art.

About the films:

The word 'pixel' comes from the merger of 'picture' and 'element'. It's usually used in the context of computer graphics to mean the smallest addressable dot on a computer screen. Of course, David Ehrlich knew this when he chose *Pixel* as the title for his richly colored, hand drawn film. Here each picture element is one of the thousand rectangles forming the grid that undulates, opens up into circular portals, and, above all, holds the super saturated gamut of colors that is one of Ehrlich's trademarks. Technically, though, the rectangles can't be pixels since they subdivide ...

But never mind that. Ehrlich's *Pixel* is a welcome addition to the lexicon of abstract, meditative, and spiritual films that include work by Oskar Fischinger, the Whitney brothers, Jordan Belson, and Santa Cruz's Larry Cuba and Pacifica's Seth Olitsky. Ehrlich considers *Pixel* to be evocative of medieval stained glass windows, and it's interesting that in his segment of the widely seen *Animated Self-Portraits*, he portrays himself in a priest-like stance. Ehrlich resides in Vermont, is a psychotherapist, and is known for his collaborations with children and international animators.

An Old Box is the only film on the program that is explicitly about Christmas. Its creator, Paul Driessen, is well known to devotees of the International Tournees of Animation; each of those programs seems to contain one of his films. Driessen's most notable early work was included in George Dunning's *Yellow Submarine* (1967); starting in 1970, he began making his own films. Of these, some are masterful examples of animation's ability to surprise and delight with unexpected twists, turns, and transformations (e.g., *Cat's Cradle* (1974) and the incredible triptych film *On Land, At Sea, and In the Air* (1980)). Others are highly perceptive slapstick (*Elbowing* (1980), *Oh What a Knight* (1982)). His recent films seem to have lost their edge, but *An Old Box* is a fine example of his ability to create characters that we care about, and to create believable landscapes with minimal line.

The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets tells us that:

"... the spring of Lethe under a white cypress was the first thing to be seen in the underworld by a newly dead soul; and the soul would be made very thirsty, and would be tempted to drink. Part of the mystery-cultists' training was to learn endurance of thirst, for a draught of Lethe would wipe out their memories of their previous incarnations and leave them no wiser than the rest of humanity ... the enlightened one should seek instead the spring of Memory (Mnemosyne) ... Classical writers made Lethe one of the principal rivers of the underworld, along with Acheron, Cocytus, Phlegethon, and Styx."

Amy Kravitz' *River Lethe* is a stormy waterscape in five parts, each crafted in a different medium; one part uses graphite, another uses aluminum powder rubbings, etc. The specific meaning of Lethe is not revealed in the film, but it is clearly a water source deserving of respect, awe, and fear. Amy Kravitz teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design (I've been told).

Geoff Dunbar's *Ubu* breathes new life into Alfred Jarry's scandalous play, *Ubu Roi* (1886). Combining a splashingly bold graphic style (imagine countryman Ralph Steadman broadening his palette) with an equally boisterous soundtrack consisting almost exclusively of grunts and screeches, Dunbar tells this tale of cowardice, greed, and betrayal as it could never be told on the stage. Watch for the brief background intrusion by Seurat!

Our featured film is Chris Sullivan's *Landscape with Fall of Icarus*. Sullivan's lab reneged on a promise to marry his images with sound in time for tonight's show, and we are forced to show the film using a double system projector. This leaves us open for all sorts of technical problems but, with luck, the screening will proceed without interruption.

Although *Icarus* makes a few appearances in *Landscape* — crashing in front of the Benign Benevolence Church and being reassembled by a child parishioner — the central character is Father Raymond Norileone, an aging priest in the inner city. The soundtrack is organized around Norileone's interview at the Ebenezer Post Familial Estates, where he is trying to get lodging after his Church has been destroyed in a fire. It's clear that the priest has only the feeblest of grips on his sanity, and as the film unfolds we see some of the episodes that have led to his mental and spiritual demise: cruelty to animals (over which humanity has dominion) and the death (and pictorial curse?) of a child. Along the way we meet fellow urban dwellers, members of Norileone's dwindling congregation, and the hooded figure of Death. Decay is everywhere, though not without humor. As always, Sullivan seems to be exorcising his own daemons: haunting childhood memories, failures of religious structure, and fear of the inevitability and unpredictability of death and illness.

Chris Sullivan's other animations include *Master of Ceremonies* (1986), *The Beholder* (1983), *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1981), *Lessons* (1980), and *Tea* (1979). His 90 minute film, *Rume's* (1988), uses live actors and marionettes in jarring juxtapositions of scale to explore a traveling soap salesman's return to his hometown after a long absence. Sullivan himself plays the lead role.

Carol Clement's short sand silhouette film, *Luna Tune*, features the voice of (then) 84-year old lesbian poet Elsa Gidlow reading her poem and manifesto, "What If, The Million and First Meditation." I popped into Women Make Movies earlier this year to pick up a catalog, and ended up viewing selections from their animation collection for close to three hours in their closet-sized screening room. (Thank you Robin Vachal!) Clement's film is one of the discoveries I made, and we'll feature more their collection in 1992.

Going through Pacific Film Archives' files, I found a copy of Suzan Pitt's original notes on *Asparagus* for its screening in the Whitney Museum's New American Filmmakers Series in early 1979. Though I've seen *Asparagus* many times — even with Pitt in person — I'd never seen these notes. I thought they were worth reproducing here:

The film begins in the end with the elimination of the symbolic asparagus. The ancient vegetable slides into the already waiting watery past. Flush! I thought of the film as circular in structure, that it could well repeat itself over and over. And so I have designed its exhibition in this way: to be installed within the theatre in which parts of it were created, and to be continually on view as a work of art. This physical situation for the audience creates, I believe, an alternative viewing attitude in which the images may be seen as a whole in the way paintings are perceived as objects. I made this film to be an object, a temporal object, structured as a series of passages which are about the creative process as I perceive it. In exhibiting the film this way I've hoped to create a situation in which people will feel a physical distance. The expressive attitude of watching an audience watching a film is meant to create a set of outside references which keep the viewer distanced so that he or she may always be aware of looking AT something as opposed to being drawn in or 'lost' in something. I want the audience to always know the illusions are being made by successive drawings through time—that I'm not trying to make an illusion they can 'believe' in.

THE TOILET

It's obvious.

THE GARDEN (as seen from the ROOM)

The ROOM is her interior and private space which has the appearance of a constant setting. Everything is in place. Her living room of character. She is a unique entity, body, complex of creativity. There are no two alike.

The GARDEN is all she perceives as Given. It is the inherent apparent everything she feels outside the ROOM. But there is an important question in terms of one's perception of the other - is the ROOM passing by or through the GARDEN? Or is the GARDEN passing by or through the ROOM?

The GARDEN is so thick. It's difficult to see how far it stretches. It's difficult to see one thing behind another thing. It appears to be so rich, so dense, so beautiful, so frightening. She feels so much about it. She wants so much to see it. She wants so much to touch it, to embrace it, to make contact with it, to understand it.

She imagines she can be a part of it and sees herself touching it through the window. Of course there is a window! Of course there is a curtain to open and close!

The asparagus seem so perfect.

THE VIEWER BOX (Doll House)

She goes on a long search and stays in the same place. Each door leads to another door, each view another view.

She keeps a doll house in her ROOM so she can make arrangements. The doll buggy is moved into the bathroom. The lap is moved off the piano and into the bedroom. The chair is examined very closely. It is so close to her eyes she can see what it's made of ASPARAGUS!

[She makes things. She makes pictures. She imagines scenes. She prepares illusions with folded paper and glitter. She arranges and rearranges. Her aesthetic judgements become more and more complicated and refined. She has to answer to herself. It's difficult to keep ... (pure?) She's seen so much! But if she studies her ROOM, its shadows and contours, her decisions are accurate.

This passage is not seen in the film. It really can't be pictured, I'm sorry. There is too much joy, and so many hours of anguish. It makes you sleepy, too, you just have to lie down.]

THE CLOSET

The wonderful closet! Here she can find the appropriate attitude for going out in case she is seen. She selects a particular mask and coat and checks it in the mirror. The mask has a masculine look ...

THE BAG

The images she has made have been piling up and cry out to be shown. Or she is crying out to show them.

THE STREET

How realistic it is!

THE THEATRE

The theatre is advertised as a showing place for artists. Here is the arena for those who want to exhibit. There is a great feeling of excitement and expectation. The audience is there to devour the images. There is a huge cardboard show on. The audience loves to be amazed. It's spectacular! It's wonderful! It moves so well and seems so meaningful! She knows beforehand (because she's done this before) that no matter which angle she chooses to watch from she will not be able to know how the audience is seeing what she has made. Therefore as soon as the bag is opened and the art works made visible, she goes home. In a taxi.

THE GARDEN

(Remember that the sequence of passages is not important so that the garden scene could happen at any point in time.)

Isn't there something very personal about sexual contact? She feels it is the closest analogy to the intimacy she has imagined with the GARDEN. She feels she is making contact with some sort of source. The GARDEN is certainly an inspiration!

— Notes by E. S. Theise

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